The CORTLANDTS of WASHINGTON SQUARE

JANET A. FAIRBANK

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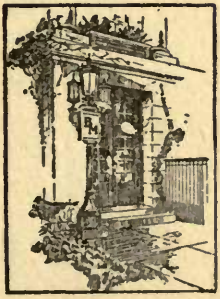
THE CORTLANDTS *of*
WASHINGTON SQUARE



The Cortlandts of Washington Square

BY

JANET A. FAIRBANK

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To

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THE CORTLANDTS *of*
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CHAPTER I

NEWS

A LITTLE girl of ten years was clearing the snow from a path leading to the side door of a farm-house so small that it barely emerged from its brilliant setting. Its walls, a soiled yellow-white, poked out of the drifts with an air of innocent disreputability, and its long roof dipped deep into the solid snow. The child put an amazing amount of effort into her work, and the feathery stuff flew from her wooden shovel, in wide and glittering parabolas, as she finished each stroke. She did not pause until she reached the gate; then she straightened her slim back experimentally, and breathed deep of the frosty air. She looked critically back at the cleared path and dug her shovel into the deeper snow outside the fence, but this was heavy work, and, moreover, not hers, so after a tentative gouge or two, she gave it up and retreated to the gate, which stood open, sagging on primitive hinges. With a wide sweep of her mittened hand she cleared the top rail of its encumbrance of snow, and swung herself up to perch there. She sat, a funny, hunched little figure in a tight jacket, and a full and too short skirt which betrayed to a censorious world extraordi-

narily knobby long legs. She was a red-haired child, with an eager wedge of a face that took no color from the keen wind off the New York hills; against the pallor of her cheeks her lips showed brilliantly red, and her eyes gloomed deep and ceremonious above an impudent nose. On the whole, she looked rather a difficult little girl; the old gate creaked, protestingly.

She gazed out indifferently at the sharp winter landscape. . . . Yesterday in church the minister had talked of missionaries. . . . Yellow sands and black skins, across wide and tumultuous seas . . . strange foods, and flaring flowers . . . palm-trees. . . . The child turned up her narrow palm and scrutinized it. Palm-trees? She turned her hand over and held it experimentally above the snow heaped on the gate-post; it threw a soft violet shadow with a sharp edge. . . . Of course—palm-trees in a thirsty land! Her opportunity for reading had been limited, but from stern and daily Bible lessons she had a definite, if unadjusted, impression of the Orient. Lovely words ran in and out of her mind. . . . A land of milk and honey,—cows and bees, nothing so strange in that,—and spicery and balm and myrrh, whatever they might be, borne by that vague animal, a camel. . . . Cedars in Lebanon. . . . Dates.—Once she had eaten a date, an odd and delicious albeit somewhat musty morsel. . . . Oases, and strangely convivial wells. . . . Savages, all—delightful thought—sinners! Suppose she were a missionary:—a lady missionary, with sleek and obedi-

ent black hair, and beautiful,—more lovely even than her mother,—so that it would be easy to save souls. She would live in a little house, and have a great many children,—missionaries did, she had mistily gathered, —and no one in the whole of Africa,—a large place, she reflected triumphantly,—would save souls as well as she. She would have to cross the ocean,—and be shipwrecked. This was accustomed ground, for she was an inland child, and was always playing shipwreck. Sometimes she was the captain gloriously going down with the ship; sometimes his wife, saving him in spite of himself; sometimes just a little girl,—just Ann,—straining out over the prow of a laboring boat, the only one to see the light that meant disaster. . . . Sharks—thick in African waters,—and reefs. . . .

A lean little boy, whose red stockings and cap made a brilliant splash of color in the white landscape, came whistling down the road. The little girl paid no attention to him, and when he reached the gate he paused with elaborate casualness to scoop up a handful of snow.

"Mad?" he inquired, stopping to roll a snowball in his mittened hands.

She swept a careless glance over him. "I guess so," she returned indifferently.

"Well,—you hadn't ought to be! You wanted me to kiss you."

"They are always doing it in books. I wanted to see what it was like."

"It wasn't my fault. I didn't want to—much."

"You don't need to, again."

The boy colored resentfully. "A girl with red hair," he scoffed.

There was a pause, while the old gate wriggled in its bed of snow.

"Your mother coming home to-day?"

"Yep."

"You'll catch it for going through the ice!"

"I expect so. . . . I had on my best jacket."

"The ice is always thin over the spring. Didn't you know that?"

The girl laughed. "What d'you think I was doing there, silly? It's no fun skating where it's thick!"

The boy looked at her with reluctant admiration. "You're a queer 'un," he remarked, as he kicked up a cloud of soft white snow. There seemed to be nothing to detain him, yet he lingered, and turned, on a sudden impulse. "Say," he said, "is it true that your mother is going to marry the minister?"

The girl's calm eyes kindled. "Who says so?" she demanded.

"Ma."

"Well, Peter,—you can tell her that she doesn't know nothing—not nothing! That minister—he's so ugly—and my mother!"

The boy hesitated no longer but went on his way with an air of braggart relief. He had made a hard ball of his handful of snow, and now he flung it. It hit a corner post of Ann's fence with a loud smack. He took up his whistle again, and his frosted breath

rose in a series of gay clouds above his red cap, while behind him Ann drooped on her gate. She hated the sanctimonious minister, and his dreary black clothes. She wondered what she might do if her mother decided on this undesirable step, and dimly she perceived that she could do nothing; the fearful impotence of childhood weighed her down, and her queer little face clouded. Somehow, before this calamity, even the rich fictitious world of her fancy seemed barren. Here was something from which pretending shrank.

After a while the sound of sleigh-bells floated across the frozen fields to her, and she brightened. They heralded her mother's return from New York City, a good seventy miles away, and she fixed eager eyes on the turn in the road; in a moment old General and the cutter rounded the big bare elm which overhung the schoolhouse at the four corners, and Ann leapt from her perch, transfigured by excitement.

"Ma is coming!" she screamed shrilly over her shoulder. "Ma is coming!"

The house door opened and a tall spare woman appeared. As she stood for an instant on the threshold, the interior of the kitchen shone behind her, warm and cozy, and Ann caught a whiff of baking bread, unbelievably enticing.

"Ma's here, Mrs. Allen,—look!"

Mrs. Allen emerged and came down Ann's path, wrapped like a mummy in a dull-colored shawl. The fresh wind blew whirlpools of light snow across the frozen crust of the fields, but not a hair on Mrs. Allen's

sleek head stirred. She looked with constitutional disapproval first at the child, and then at the approaching sleigh; if Ann had been older she might have found something defensive in her determined suppression of emotion.

"It is high time she came," she said. "And she'll be cold,—driving all the way over from Whartley Township on a day like this."

Ann silently reviewed the past fortnight, and gloomily reflected that if cold her mother would probably be cross. The little girl shot a soft glance at her companion, ingratiation in every line of her; she hoped an account of her misdeeds would not immediately be offered,—it was extraordinary how many things could go wrong in two weeks,—but she had small expectation of anything so desirable happening.

And then, suddenly, she realized that the woman in the approaching sleigh had something foreign about her. Her pretty face, with its cheeks whipped a bright red by the cold wind, was the same, but there was a sort of flowing opulence in her appointments which made her seem alien. A great many ribbons and ruffles were dancing and snapping in the breeze, and the hired man who drove the farm horse was lost behind a surging billow of crinoline. She thought that her mother had never looked so beautiful; her pale hair shone richly gold against a coat of black fur. Before she could spring to meet her, Mrs. Allen grasped her shoulder so hard that it hurt; as Ann wriggled free she caught an aghast murmur.

"My land,—a sealskin sack!"

Suddenly affection for the pretty creature in the sleigh overcame Ann, and she plunged eagerly out into the deep snow of the road, calling, unexpectedly to herself: "Ma! You'd never marry that old minister! Say, ma,—would you?"

Her mother laughed, a gay thrill that brought two dimples into play, and showed a flash of white teeth. "No, Ann, never!" she called back, withdrawing her hand from a tiny muff she carried, in order to wave it gaily. Mrs. Allen snorted disapprovingly, and Ann turned to glower upon her. She resented the too probable shattering of all this happiness.

The cutter drew up before the cleared path, and Ann's mother stepped lightly out upon the firm snow that creaked under her feet. She leaned forward over her flowing skirts and kissed her daughter daintily; suddenly her radiant face clouded. "My, Ann," she exclamed, "you look homelier than ever." And she sighed fretfully as she stood looking at her.

Mrs. Allen intervened. "Minnie Byrne," she began sternly, "where did you get those clothes?" And catching sight of a necklace of seed pearls that hung lustrously in the opening of the sealskin sack, she paused, speechless.

Ann flung herself in front of her mother. "Ma looks just lovely!" she declared, and she ran her hand caressingly down the fur of her mother's sleeve. "My, how soft!"

"It is all right," the newcomer declared breathlessly. "You don't know what has happened to me."

Mrs. Allen continued to gaze at her with a severity

which Ann suddenly realized partly masked a disquieting fright. "Considering that you went to the city to see about investing the last two thousand dollars you had in the world, and have come back here all tricked out like this,—I should say that you had lost your wits, Minnie Byrne."

"Well, I haven't . . . I've spent a good part of the two thousand, though."

"I thought as much," Mrs. Allen observed. She steadied herself with one hand on the gate; the fear in her voice was now plain to see upon her rugged face.

"And that isn't all," the newcomer hurried on, "I've done something worse than that. . . . I've been married!"

This declaration was received in startled silence. Ann, strangled with an emotion that was half terror and half affection, yet somehow wholly protective, clung to her mother's nervous hand, while Mrs. Allen stared at her, white-faced. Over the side of the cutter the hired man gaped, friendly and interested.

Feeling the disapproval of her audience, the bride flung up a spirited head. "You are all ready to blame me, aren't you?" she demanded. "Well,—you wait until you hear whom I've married!"

"I hope you have married some one who can care for you, Minnie, in a worldly way, as well as spiritually."

"I've married Hudson Cortlandt," she said, and laughed.

Even Ann knew this was a name to conjure with,

and stared wide-eyed at her mother. Mrs. Allen leaped at a possible explanation. "Some one has been imposing on you!" she cried.

"No, it is true. . . . Why shouldn't he marry me?"

They went into the farm-house kitchen, rigid in spite of the tropical heat of the wood fire that leaped in the stove, and the cross-examination continued.

"How did you get to know him?"

Mrs. Cortlandt blushed. "Well," she said, "the first afternoon I was in New York I was walking in Union Square, and I saw a fine gentleman ahead of me drop a wallet. Of course I picked it up, and there was his name—Hudson Cortlandt. . . . I had just read in the papers that President Pierce had appointed him minister to Switzerland, and I wanted to see how he looked. . . . I was glad I was the one to find it. I ran after him,—and that was the beginning."

"What did he think of you, so free as that?"

Mrs. Cortlandt dimpled sweetly. "Well, he thought I was pretty," she said daringly. "And after he had thanked me, he walked on with me, and asked me my name, and if my husband were in New York, and I told him that Michael was dead, and then he took me back to the St. Nicholas Hotel. He asked me if my room was satisfactory, and it wasn't, very, so he came into the hotel with me and spoke to the manager about it, and after that there was nothing they wouldn't do for me, and he stayed to talk with me for a while, in the parlor. . . . When he went

away he asked me to go driving with him the next afternoon and almost every day after that he took me somewhere, and ten days later we were married!"

"It will be a change for you, Minnie,—and for Ann."

Suddenly Mrs. Cortlandt's round blue eyes filled with miserable tears. "That is the worst of it!" she declared. "He doesn't know about Ann."

"What do you mean,—he doesn't know?"

"Well, I didn't happen to mention her at first,—and after,—when I saw he fancied me,—I thought I wouldn't tell him just then, and it was always like that. . . . I was afraid," she ended in a miserable whisper.

"And you deceived him?"

"I just didn't tell him; that isn't deception, really. He might not have married me, Mrs. Allen, and I should have had to come back to this,—forever!"

"And what do you intend to do now?"

"I shall take Ann back with me, and he'll see her. . . . He'll have to. . . . We are sailing for Europe next week."

Ann leaped to her feet, transfigured, but her mother looked at her resentfully. "Don't jump about, Ann," she said impatiently, and added, turning to Mrs. Allen: "If only she were pretty!"

And so it happened that the ducking of Ann's best coat in the mill-pond became an unimportant event, and it was not necessary for her to explain to an uncomprehending parent the allurement of skimming lightly over the surface of thin ice.

CHAPTER II

TRANSPLANTED

THE delight of her first ride in a train speedily crowded the sorrow of parting from Ann's mind. She sat straight and taut on the hard seat beside her mother, her lips compressed, her eyes blazing. Inside and out, the swift and unreal thing was marvelous; she felt excitement run through her as water ran through the brooks in the spring,—a wild delicious torrent of excitement. Mrs. Cortlandt left her alone, except that now and then she tried the effect of poking her unfortunate hair this way or that, or twitched her clothes in a fretful effort to change the look of the child's eager, staring face. She cried for a few moments, and then, murmuring that she must not make her eyes red, she ceased definitely. After that she gazed moodily out of the window at the flying white landscape, and often she sighed piteously, with a sobbing catch in her breath, like a frightened child.

To Ann, used only to the tranquillity of a sleepy village, the confusion at the terminal was amazing. The haste with which people left the car gave her a sense of calamity, the keener because it was unexplained. She seized her mother's bag and hurled herself into the crowded aisle; people drew back, frowning, but she gained the freedom of the platform with an exhilarating feeling of triumph.

A ferry-boat! Occasional copies of *Harper's Illustrated Weekly* had reached Milton Center, and Ann was prepared for the extraordinary look of these maritime monsters, but no wood-cut could have prepared her for the sickening and delightful feeling of uncertainty under her feet. She seized her mother's arm appealingly, in an ecstasy of excitement, and the pallid lady said absently, "Yes,—horrid, isn't it?" Ann abandoned her and wormed through the group of people at the bow. Ice cakes! Actually ice cakes, that slipped away from the blunt prow of the ferry, and now and then crunched delightfully. She leaned on the rail and gloated. This was better than sharks. . . . How prettily the round white cakes rode the blue surface of the water! Away off to one side she looked and looked, and could see no opposite shore. . . . The sea? Her eyes ached from the blueness. . . . Coming toward them down the river, with swelling canvas set, was a slender and towering ship; she cut the water smartly, and it fell away before her in a trim and shining roll on either side. She passed so close that the child could see the quick moving figures of men,—swarthy of face, and foreign. One leaned on the rail and waved at the lumbering ferry-boat. He had rings in his ears! Ann waved back, unseen; she was pledging herself to romance. The water in the wake bubbled creamily,—it was like the top of the milk pail, at home,—and gold print on the stern said *Santa Lucia, Venezia.*

Ahead of them the shore sloped swiftly back from

the water-front; and in the foreground the high steeple of a church shepherded a huddled collection of buildings. The late afternoon sun mellowed the red brick surfaces of the nearer houses, and picked out the snow-covered roofs in blocks of black and white. Ann had never known that a city could be like that,—miles of it, overwhelming and intriguing. Behind the town the open country lay; she could just make out woods and farms;—familiar things and friendly. Suddenly the portentous ferry-house swallowed them up. Ann shrank back from the jarring grind of the landing, convinced that no mere boat could stand such treatment! The crowd swelled forward, and her mother reclaimed her rebukingly. Outside the ferry-house they paused, aghast. Not wishing to break the news of Ann's existence to her husband on the ferry-dock, Mrs. Cortlandt had not notified him of the hour of her arrival, and for all her fashionable clothes, she was almost as dazed by the city's confusion as Ann, who frankly gaped, and adored it. There were dozens of darting sleighs, more, in a few feet, than in all Milton Center, and the air was clamorous with their bells. The people on the sidewalks, leisurely ladies in wide crinolines and fine gentlemen with glossy side-whiskers and high hats, seemed as unreal to her as pictures in *Godey's Ladies' Book*. The child clung tightly to her mother's hand, abashed, but she pulled her forward, nevertheless.

The Knickerbocker stage was waiting as they came from the narrow tunnel of the ferry-house. The four

big horses that drew it pranced in the trodden snow, and the bells on their necks glistened in the sunlight. Mrs. Cortlandt and Ann climbed in and seated themselves on the long bench that ran down the side of the coach. The little girl was eager to start; she looked impatiently from the driver on his high throne in front to the conductor at his place on the steps in the rear, and kicked her feet restlessly in the straw of the floor. Beside her, her mother sat trembling visibly; it was evident to the most casual beholder that Mrs. Hudson Cortlandt was badly frightened.

At length they started, with a jingling of bells and a plunging of horses that made the people on the street turn to watch them glide past. Ann pressed her face to the window, now and then impatiently wiping away the cloud of her breath on the glass. It was an amazing thing to her to see rows of houses close together; and the newer parts of Greenwich Village, where the buildings were of the opulent three-story-and-basement order, filled her with a breathless awe. Everything she saw enchanted her; even the bare ailantus trees seemed a better thing, in their novelty, than the towering elms she had known.

She was loath to leave the stage with further districts unexplored, and at the same time she longed to mingle with the people on the sidewalks. The streets where the New York boys were snowballing seemed to her a better place to play than a village common. She wondered what they would think if they knew she could throw as well as any of them.

Washington Square was her mother's destination, for here, on the fringe of the town, the Cortlandts and a few other leading families had recently built themselves new houses. The place was enclosed with a high iron fence, which gave the little park an air of gentility. Ann looked with darkening eyes at the ample, dignified houses, rose pink against the snow.

"Does my new father live here?" she demanded. A lonely feeling made her voice break. Suddenly she realized for the first time the threat of a strange relationship. She wondered if he, too, would have glossy side-whiskers, terrifying and dominant.

Her mother nodded. "His brother does," she said, "Mr. Hendricks Cortlandt. Your—my—Mr. Hudson Cortlandt lives with him."

It was the largest of the houses that she timidly approached, and, clinging tremulously to Ann, summoned courage to climb the wide steps, and pull a silver bell handle mysteriously set beside the glass door. A black man came to admit them, and Ann looked at him gapingly, unable, in her surprise, to return his gleaming smile. He was the first negro she had seen, and she felt that life was indeed opening before her. Mrs. Cortlandt paused.

"Is Mr. Hendricks Cortlandt at home?" she asked and her voice trembled.

"Yas'm. He is in de library." With a dexterous turn, the man shut the front door behind them, and opened one on the right-hand side of the wide hall. Ann had a quick impression of a lofty room, all

lined with books,—she had never dreamed that there could be so many,—and of the late afternoon sun coming through the windows in long yellow streaks so that a fire under a narrow marble mantel glowed red. Then she saw a tall oldish man rise from his chair and come forward. Immediately she liked him, in spite of her breathless nervousness.

"Well, my dear," Ann heard him say, "back again?" And then his eyes fell on her. He looked at her in kindly perplexity. "And who is this young lady?" he asked.

The little girl glanced expectantly at her mother, but no sound came from her white lips, so she said, as cheerfully as she could: "I am Ann," and, catching no gleam of intelligence in his attentive eyes, she added, "Ann Byrne, you know."

Mr. Cortlandt continued to look at her blankly. Slowly a realization of who she might be dawned on him, and he turned his steady gaze on his sister-in-law, as she trembled before him.

"Your child?" he inquired coldly.

Mrs. Cortlandt sank into a chair; she was manifestly struggling with tears. "Yes," she admitted briefly.

"A child! But my brother said you had no family. . . . Does he know, madam?"

As her mother was now frankly crying, Ann took up the burden of their sorry tale. "She didn't tell him," she confided. "I am a surprise, and it is too bad I am not pretty."

The head of the house of Cortlandt straightened up scornfully. "Ah," he said, "I see."

There was an uncomfortable silence in the library: it was broken by Ann, who volunteered cheerfully, "She has to tell my new father, now, all about me."

Mrs. Cortlandt looked up to nod a miserable assent to this announcement.

"It might have been—less embarrassing, if you had done so—earlier. He was insane about you."

"I was afraid."

"I see. We shall have to tell him, however. Is this the only one, madam?"

"Oh, yes," Mrs. Cortlandt said, in shocked surprise, "of course, if there had been more I should have told him!"

"Let me look at you, young lady." He put a gentle hand under Ann's sharp chin, and turned her face toward him.

"She has never looked like me," her mother mourned. "She is like her father, in every way."

"This makes the man important. . . . What was your first husband?"

"He ran a newspaper,—just a country one. He always expected to do better, but then he died."

Ann wriggled away from the stranger's improprietory touch. "My father was Irish," she volunteered, "and he was very clever, and he had red hair, like me!"

"Machree got into trouble in Fenian riots,—I never

knew just what he did,—but he had to leave Ireland. . . . We were only married a few years. . . . He was always expecting to do something he didn't: he was a great man to plan, but it is true, he was clever. . . . He was always getting into trouble, and he never would listen to what I told him. . . . What do you think Hudson will do?"

"There is only one way to answer that," Mr. Cortlandt said simply. He crossed the room with long determined strides to summon the man in the hall. "Tell Mr. Hudson his wife is here," he directed.

Mrs. Cortlandt alternately turned the curl of fair hair that hung from beneath her bonnet about her slender fingers, and dabbled at her eyes with her handkerchief. "I am frightened," she confided unnecessarily.

Mr. Cortlandt turned to Ann. "We have only just finished supper," he said. "Suppose you and I go and see if there is any left." The child glanced irresolutely at her mother. Mrs. Cortlandt looked very small and miserable, crouched in a chair by the window, where the gray light of an early winter twilight faded her blonde radiance to drab. Ann wanted to stay with her, but suddenly she realized that she was devastatingly hungry. Her mother caught her eye.

"Go with him, Ann, for mercy sakes!" she urged irritably.

Mr. Cortlandt laughed, for some unexplained, grown-up reason, and led her away through folding-doors into what seemed indubitably, fairyland. Her

first impression was of a great glare of light; it was like noon-day in the big empty room, and she blinked, bewildered. There were none of the engulfing shadows and obliterated far corners to which she was accustomed; the hard radiance seemed to her antagonistic. Directly under an overpowering brass chandelier was a square table covered with a cloth so white that it glistened like snow: this, then, was the dining-room. In Milton Center one sewed, read and sometimes slept in such an apartment, but this one seemed sacred to the business of dining. She looked about her with avid curiosity. On the center of the table a blue glass vase on a marble base held a handful of roses,—actually roses, in January! On one wall was a huge black walnut sideboard, with a deer's head and horns, all made of polished wood, surmounting it. It was loaded, inexplicably, with numerous shining silver dishes, and in the center there was a glass bowl larger than a milk pan, cut so that it quivered in tiny glittering points like flames. Hung high on the walls were dark-colored pictures of frowning men and smiling ladies, in massive gilt frames that caught the light in long golden streaks.

"What is it?" Ann demanded breathlessly, pointing to the fixture from whence the glory sprang.

"The chandelier?" Mr. Cortlandt inquired, bewildered in his turn.

"No, the light. It isn't candles,—it isn't paraffine, it—"

"Oh, that! . . . It is gas."

"Oh!" She recalled weary hours filling lamps. "Do you put it in, like oil?"

"No. . . . I'll tell you about it, but first we must have supper. Are you hungry?"

Ann gasped. It was extraordinary, but the enormous appetite which had ravaged her but a moment before was gone. "I—don't know," she confessed. She could not have said why, but she was horribly afraid that she was going to cry!

Mr. Cortlandt drew a chair out for her and, pulling a bell cord, he summoned the black man and told him to bring food. "You didn't have gas in—er—Milton Center?" he suggested.

Ann shook her head; her eyes were swimming with tears, and met Mr. Cortlandt's miserably.

Suddenly he pulled his chair closer to hers, and began to talk to her, rapidly and continuously: at first she was so occupied in fighting down her inconvenient emotion that she paid little attention, but presently she understood that he was, with extraordinary kindness, telling her all about gas, where it was made, how it was stored and distributed, and the changes its use had made in cities. She began to listen attentively. She forgot all about the delicious things she was eating as the tale ran on; she was more interested than she had ever been before in all her life.

After that they began to talk of Milton Center, and she spoke of Mrs. Allen casually.

"You lived with her?" Mr. Cortlandt leaned forward.

"Yes. . . . Isn't your brother a Christian?"

Mr. Cortlandt sat back suddenly. "I hope so," he said. "Why do you ask?"

"Well, Mrs. Allen took ma and me to live with her because she was a Christian," Ann explained. "She often said so. . . . She said she hoped she was laying up treasures in Heaven. And I hope so, too."

"Your mother had no money at all?"

"Oh, yes, ma had two thousand dollars. That is a great amount of money. Mrs. Allen always said it was a sacred trust:—that was when ma wanted to spend it, you see."

"Yes, I see. And what did you do in Milton Center, Miss Ann?"

"I went to school. I don't like my teacher,—not much. And of course I did chores."

"What sort of chores?"

"Just helping 'round; feeding the chickens, an' helping get supper, an' washing up."

This was dear and familiar ground, and Ann chatted pleasantly on. Her heart warmed toward Mr. Cortlandt in reward for his kindly interest; and she poured out unstintingly the simple story of her life and her mother's. It was a good half-hour before she thought of returning to the library.

As Mr. Cortlandt slid back the folding-door, the sound of a man's voice, harsh and angry, burst in on them. "My new father?" Ann demanded, frowning.

Her friend nodded, and she peered into the room under his arm. A tall man was striding furiously

about, and sure enough, he had side-whiskers,—unusually flamboyant ones. "It isn't that I resent the child," he was storming. "It is the deceit I can not forgive. The child, of course, is a responsibility,—I am not a man to shirk that,—but I hate deceit!" He turned, as his brother opened the door. "Do you know what she has done?" he demanded.

Mr. Hendricks Cortlandt nodded, and held Ann back, as she would have pushed indignantly past him. "There's only one, you know, Hudson," he said pacifically. "There might just as well have been six."

His brother paused, arrested. "Six?" he repeated. The word had the force of an explosion.

The older man laughed, and Ann wondered why. "Of course," he said, "it would have made no difference had there been, since it is the deceit that you resent, and not the children."

"Minnie," her husband roared at her, frantic appeal in his voice, "are there others?" The bride was so overcome by his violence that she merely shook her head speechlessly, but Ann flung off her friend's restraining hand and burst into the room. She confronted her stepfather fiercely; her hands were clenched into little fists.

"Don't you dare speak to my mother like that!" she said. She kept her voice very low, to be sure that the terror she felt should not break into it.

Hudson Cortlandt glared at her, eye to eye; then he swung away, and appealed to the world at large. "Is this the child my wife asks me to take to my

bosom? This red-headed, gawky girl? This spitfire?"

"The deceit would have been less, I have no doubt, had she not had red hair," his brother interposed peaceably, and to her amazement Ann found herself laughing convulsively, in spite of her anger and fright.

Hudson came suddenly down to earth. "Well," he announced, "Minnie will have to choose between us,—the child or me."

There was a sudden silence in the room, broken only by the culprit's sobs. Her husband then addressed himself directly to her. "I won't have her, that's flat. . . . If you'll leave her, I'll take you with me;—if not, I'm done with you!"

Something in her mother's lifted face frightened Ann, and she found resolution for further defiance. "We don't want to go with you," she declared passionately. "You can go off to Europe by yourself. . . . We'll stay here." She ended on a softened note, and she turned her eyes slantingly on her new friend. She thought that he received this declaration somewhat coldly, and her heart skipped a beat miserably. He was looking at his brother with an expression that terrified her.

"What do you wish, Mrs. Cortlandt?" he demanded.

"I don't know!" she sobbed. "I am so unhappy! How can I go? . . . How can I stay?" She looked imploringly from Ann to her husband, before she buried her face in a minute pocket handkerchief.

Hudson Cortlandt was softened by this wailing appeal. "I am willing to look after the girl," he said uncomfortably. "You could leave her in good hands."

Mrs. Cortlandt looked up with a gleam of returning cheerfulness. "I suppose I might," she murmured.

"I don't see why you can't send her back where she came from; it will be the same for her as if you had never married me, except that her keep will be paid. . . . We sail in a week," he added briskly. He was obviously glad not to break with the pretty creature he had married. He turned to his brother, with a specious relief in his manner. "It is all perfectly simple after all,—isn't it?"

Mr. Hendricks Cortlandt looked at him for a moment, and Ann wondered if it was something in his steady gaze that caused the younger man to drop his eyes uneasily. At length he said, "I shall be alone here, when you are gone. . . . It is possible that I might, for a time, undertake the responsibility of Miss Ann,—with the understanding, of course, that you will, later on, relieve me." He turned to the silent child. "Would you like to stay with me?" he asked gently.

Ann felt the tears burn against her eyelids, so she only nodded. She felt miserably certain that he did not want her. He turned to Mrs. Cortlandt. "I assure you, madam, that your daughter will be as well cared for as lies in my power. Perhaps a little girl in my home may prove a blessing. Eh, Miss Ann?"

The child was spared the difficulty of an answer, for at the moment when she felt that a supreme effort of some sort was expected of her, the library door swung open, and a high clear voice cried, "Do I intrude, Hendricks?"

"Gad!" said Hudson. "It's Clarissa!" Ann was conscious of a general dismay, and that it centered mysteriously on her.

She had never known any one could be so lovely as the lady who appeared in the high doorway. Her hair was warmly brown, and shining; it hung about her face in artful and complicated arrangements, and her eyes were shining and quick and pretty, above her bright pink cheeks. Her throat was very long, and so white that it seemed almost dazzling where a black velvet band clasped its slimness, and her shoulders were white, too, and sloped beautifully down to a ridiculous puff of a pale blue sleeve half-way to her elbow. Her skirts were very wide, and Ann had never seen so tiny a waist. Compared with its brittle elegance her mother's hard country thinness had a common look. She laughed as she came down the room, showing pretty white teeth.

"A family jar already, Hudson?" she demanded, sending quick and amused glances from her embarrassed brother to his limp bride. "Doves in their little nest, you know!" She turned to Mr. Cortlandt and her darting look dropped to Ann, who stood pressed close beside him.

"Why,—where did you find that, Hendricks?" she queried, her voice suddenly shrill, and all the smiling sweetness gone from her eyes.

"This is Miss Ann Byrne, Clarissa, and fate has sent her to me."

Ann moved clumsily forward as she heard herself thus singled out, but the shining creature before her made no move in her direction. Instead she looked at her brother in frozen amazement, and a quick flush dyed even her white throat.

"You mean?" she began, and paused.

"She is Hudson's stepdaughter, but it has been arranged that she is to stay here with me."

Mrs. Renneslyer swung around to her younger brother, with a great swirl of blue gauze skirts. "So!" she cried. "This is what your mad marriage has done! A child,—left here with Hendricks!"

"I believe that I am glad to have her, Clarissa," Mr. Cortlandt intervened. "Already I am charmed with her."

"Charmed?" Her eyes swept Ann from her untidy red hair to her shabbily shod feet, and she laughed incredulously. "You are making the best of it,—that is evident,—but why should she stay with you? Can't Hudson assume his responsibilities? If you want a child about,—and I am sure I don't understand why you do,—there's my Hendricks, or little Fanny Cortlandt."

"That will do, Clarissa!" Mr. Cortlandt spoke so

sternly that Ann shrank back, frightened. "To what are we indebted for the honor of this visit?"

"I have a *loge* at Tripler's Hall to-night; I came in to see if Hudson and my charming new sister-in-law would care to share it with me. It is *Madame Rachel.*"

"Oh!" cried Mrs. Hudson. "She is that famous French actress, isn't she? I could be ready in a very few moments,—fifteen, at the most!"

Mrs. Renneslyer swept her with indifferent eyes. She was no longer flushed: indeed, she looked rather white, except for the determined pink of her cheeks. "Very well," she said, indifferently. She established herself in a chair by the fire, arranging her skirts with considerable pomp, and opening a fan which dangled from her waist, to shield herself from the flames.

Mr. Cortlandt seated himself opposite her, leaning toward her with a curious look of an antagonist. "Go with your mother, Ann," he said. "You can doubtless help her hurry."

And so Ann's future was decided. When she was alone with her mother, during the last precious week of their companionship, she found that the only way to avoid mutual tears was not to mention the coming parting, so she obligingly refrained. There were plenty of other things to think about. In the first place she was plunged into an orgy of buying. She and her mother both had completely new wardrobes. The pretty bride bought lavishly, in spite of her

imminent visit to Paris, and Ann became the bewildered possessor of woolen dresses with stiffening in the full ankle-length skirts, pantalettes that tied on above her knee, and hung, white and prim, below them, and, actually, a taffeta, in checks of green and black, with white ruffles in the sleeves, and black velvet bands about its low-cut neck. Milton Center had never known its like; Ann could scarcely recognize herself when she stood, arrayed in it, before the tall pier glass in the drawing-room. But she was, she decided gloomily, no prettier, for all her fine clothes.

The days flew by. On one of them Mr. Cortlandt ordered out his smart cutter and drove Ann away out to the colored orphan asylum at Forty-second Street and Fifth Avenue, so that she might bestow upon the worthy poor those old clothes which she had, in Milton Center, packed with so much respect. She found the rôle of Lady Bountiful embarrassing, but delightful, and came home in high spirits. On another afternoon she and her mother interviewed governesses. It seemed that Mrs. Renneslyer had vetoed a school. "Until she is tamed," she said coolly, and so, to Ann's great delight, it was decided that she was to be educated at home. Mrs. Cortlandt was quite ill at ease before the elegant creatures who came to see her, but finally chose one who had, in her youth, been in France. "Ann can get the accent, but not the morals," she told Mr. Cortlandt, quite like a woman of the world.

People came and went during the swift interlude, but the child retained no clear memory of them. Mrs. Renneslyer was the only one whose initial impression persisted through later familiarity; Ann always remembered the malicious prettiness of her first appearance. At her brother-in-law's request, Mrs. William Cortlandt brought her daughter Fanny to see the newcomer, but the two children were shy of each other, and Ann had no time for contemporaneous intimacy in her last days with her mother. Mrs. Hudson was inclined to like this sister-in-law. "She doesn't make me feel uncomfortable, as Clarissa does," she confided to her daughter, and Ann could readily understand that, as Fanny's mother was a stout and breathless lady, with none of Mrs. Renneslyer's overpowering elegance. Moreover, she looked at her brother-in-law's beautiful bride with reluctant but endearing admiration, although any reference to Ann's indefinite visit in Washington Square turned her flushed cheeks purple.

"She is a widow, just as I was," Mrs. Hudson informed Ann. "Except that her little girl is pretty. Fanny is sweet, isn't she? I hope you will try to be like her, Ann: she is such a little lady. Hudson says that when her father died, years ago, his wife wanted to come here to live, and that he and Mr. Renneslyer made horrid bets as to whether she would land Mr. Hendricks Cortlandt as a second husband or not. . . . She didn't, of course, and I am sure I don't wonder, although Hudson says that she was quite

pretty, once." The bride preened herself before her mirror, secure in her young good looks. "Funny, isn't it, that Mr. Hendricks Cortlandt has never married?"

"Why hasn't he?" Ann demanded.

"Hudson says it is because he has never unbent enough to fall in love, but I don't know. . . . It doesn't sound sensible; it is so easy to fall in love. . . . Perhaps he is shy, under that mangnificent manner!" She laughed delightedly at the possibility that the formality which made her uneasy masked a human weakness. "Do you like me in blue?" she asked her little girl, who adored her in anything.

Ann clung to her in a way that was flattering but disconcerting. She followed her miserably about the house; stood beside her bureau when she curled her blonde hair; helped her to button the complicated new frocks, and to pack her finery into two shiny new trunks. She was always under her stepfather's feet, but she bore it stolidly, and was relieved to find that he, too, suppressed his irritation at her constant presence.

Notwithstanding all their preparations, however, it was not until they clung together at the dock that the mother and daughter suddenly admitted the serious nature of their separation. Mrs. Cortlandt shed a few gentle tears, and prettily besought her brother-in-law to be kind to his charge, but Ann only hung desperately about her mother's neck, dry-eyed and silent. In looking back on the leave-taking it always seemed to her that in the moment before the gang-

plank was withdrawn, she grew appreciably older. She never forgot the feel of her mother's cool fresh cheek against her own, or the last lovely glimpse of her, young, agitated and charming, as she leaned out over the stern, between the churning side-paddles, crying and smiling together, and waving and kissing both her hands to the old man and the child on the dock.

The *Arctic* ordinarily took fifteen days to make the voyage to Liverpool, and Mr. Cortlandt told Ann that at least as much time again must be allowed before letters from the travelers could be expected, but the child was impatient to hear, nevertheless. She often interrupted her dreary morning lessons with questions about London and Paris, those towns soon to be sublimated by her pretty mother's presence, and was reproved for it. It made no difference, however, as a report of the affair to her guardian resulted in his bringing out delightful books of pictures of the places the travelers would shortly see:—cities, and rivers, and mountains. She felt that she could scarcely bear it to wait for the time to come to rejoin them, amid these new and extraordinary scenes.

Her mother had been gone only a fortnight, when, one snowy afternoon, Mr. Cortlandt returned home earlier than was his custom. Ann knew at once, as soon as she had run to meet him, that something terrible had happened, because he was so sorry for her. The compassion in his eyes awakened all the bravery in her soul. The worst had happened: there had been a collision at sea, and a scattered few pas-

sengers, picked up by another ship, had returned to tell the tragic tale of the doomed *Arctic,* which had sunk off the banks, while only two days out from New York. For a time Mr. Cortlandt refused to give up hope, and every day he went to the offices of the Collins' Line, where anxious men and women clamored for assurance that their friends or relatives were among the few picked up; but as time went on he was forced to abandon any expectation of the rescue of his brother and his bride.

Back in America, President Pierce then cast about among his supporters for another minister to Switzerland, and in Washington Square Mr. Cortlandt devoted himself to comforting a passionately rebellious child. Her sorrow, he knew, would pass, and for himself he felt a curiously poignant regret at the sudden end of his lovely and foolish young sister-in-law,—a deeper regret, possibly, than if she had been less lovely, and more wise.

CHAPTER III

TAKING ROOT

ANN took the shock of her mother's death in a curiously adult fashion that touched Mr. Cortlandt deeply. She defensively fenced off discussion of her bereavement, and endeavored to carry on the pleasant and amusing life she had begun with him before the bad news came, but under the strain of this pretense her irregular little face grew white and drawn, and her eyes, under her shock of red hair, became entirely unchildlike in their tragic intensity. Nothing could have bound her closer to the old man than this reticence, for he, too, found grief something that it was impossible to chat about, and he said to himself that under strain his young foundling was showing breeding. He was at a loss to know what to do with her, however; it seemed brutal to leave her alone in the big Washington Square house; she had a trick of following him out on the steps when he left for his office in the morning, and smiling determinedly at him as he drove away, that brought a lump into his throat.

Acting on his suggestion, Mrs. William Cortlandt made an effort to approach the girl. She was willing enough to do it, for her heart was too kind not to respond to the appeal of a lonely child, but she was forced to report no success.

"She absolutely was short with me, Hendricks,—

imagine that! I could get nowhere with her, even when I told her that it was ungrateful of her so to ignore your wishes."

Mr. Cortlandt sighed. The reticence which delighted him in Ann he often found sadly lacking in his sister-in-law. He took up the matter with the child, however. "Ann," he said, forcing himself, with some difficulty, to speak directly to a disagreeable point, "why were you so stiff-necked with Mrs. Cortlandt? She meant to be kind to you, and one should not be priggish with those who mean to be kind."

Ann shot to her feet, and stood, tense and erect, at his knee. "I know," she said. "I was horrid to her. . . . I couldn't help it. . . . You see—she hated my mother—she and Mrs. Renneslyer. . . . So I can't talk to them about her. . . . There's only you. . . . You and Mrs. Allen." She broke off, and the old man could see that she was struggling with inconvenient tears. He put his hand on hers, and after a moment she went on. "I've been thinking. . . . Mrs. Allen is used to me; she had me with her almost all my life, you see,—and she is all alone, like me. . . . I could be a help to her, some. . . . I know she would take me. . . . I am almost certain she would." It was out at last, and she turned swiftly away from him, so that Mr. Cortlandt could not tell if she were crying or not.

He was curiously moved himself. There was something so valiant in Ann's abdication that he wanted to take her in his unaccustomed arms, and bid

her defy the world. He looked at her slim back and her stiffly held head, and wondered if tears were streaming down her face. Suddenly he was ashamed of the half formed thoughts he had harbored as to how he would ever succeed in unburdening himself of the inheritance of his brother's stepchild. He had never seen Mrs. Allen, but now he thought of her with an antagonism that amazed him. . . . He wanted Ann himself! All at once this realization shot across his bewilderment, simplifying everything. He wondered how he could ever make the child understand his need of her. . . . Her shoulders moved convulsively, and at once, without any further deliberation, he went over to her. "What am I doing?" he wondered, as he went. He put his hands on Ann's shoulders, and turned her to him. Yes, she was crying. "Mrs. Allen can't have you!" he said at once, almost roughly. "I want you myself."

Ann dashed the tears from her eyes, and looked up at him for an instant. "Why?" she said. "Why do you want me?" She strained away from him, repellent and hard.

All at once hopelessness swept over Mr. Cortlandt. "How could I hope to win a child's affection?" he wondered. Undoubtedly she preferred Mrs. Allen. "I want you because I've come to care for you, my child," he said heavily. "I am quite selfish about it." He looked steadily down at her lifted face, and saw joy transfigure it, in a flashing glimpse, before she flung herself upon him, and gave way to an outburst

of sobs. He gathered her into his arms, and let her cry in peace; he made no effort to stop her, he only smoothed her rough red hair with a clumsy hand, and once he pressed his lips to it, shyly.

After that there was no question of Ann's future: the old man and the child understood, whatever bewilderment the rest of the family might have about their relationship. Mr. Cortlandt frankly abandoned himself to the joy he felt in his vicarious parenthood. He came home early in the afternoons, in order to teach Ann to drive, and he delighted in her fearlessness. It was not easy to control his fast pacer, and he was proudly conscious that people on Fifth Avenue turned in amazement to look after the child with the flying red hair who drove a shining cutter so recklessly. It was, however, in the long winter evenings, when he took advantage of the freedom from social engagements which his mourning gave him to read aloud to Ann, that he most enjoyed her. They dipped into all kinds of books; he found this experimenting with a child's imagination to be a pure delight, and Ann flowered intellectually under so stimulating a companionship.

The first time they went to Grace Church for the Sunday morning service the child was the recipient of many curious glances from under demure bonnets. She looked extraneous and insignificant in the big Cortlandt pew, and was possibly aware of it, for when the service began she hunched herself nearer its other occupant, where she might lean against him and share

his hymnal, after the pleasant Milton Center fashion where books were few. When he put a friendly and protecting arm about her thin shoulders an audible flutter was evident behind them, and Mr. Cortlandt smiled, briefly and sardonically. He wished, that first Sunday morning, that Ann had been endowed with her mother's beauty, so that a mere glance at her would constitute a triumphant answer to speculations about her. Across the aisle he could, without turning his head, see his niece Fanny's glossy brown curls, scalloped over a shell-pink cheek, and catch the immovable line of her docile profile, outlined against her mother's sealskin sack. She sat very still, and lifted a politely attentive face, while Ann made no attempt to achieve such resignation. Her small body wriggled continuously under the strain of the long service.

Just ahead of them was his sister's pew, with Mrs. Renneslyer,—very lovely in black cashmere tempered by an ermine cape,—sitting straight and alert at one end, and her husband, red-faced and jovial-looking, slouched down in his corner on the aisle. Between them was their son Hendricks, named for his uncle, and destined from his cradle, as Mr. Cortlandt well knew, to be his heir and his favorite. With Ann's lack of beauty in mind, it gave him some satisfaction to look at his nephew, for young Hendricks at thirteen resembled neither his beautiful mother nor his dashing father. He was a fat child, with somnolent eyes, and lips that pouted, as he endured the sermon. "Clarissa shouldn't throw stones," her brother reflected.

When they came out on the steps, they found a light snow falling. The thin flakes scurried about aimlessly under a leaden sky, and caught in the carved gray stone of the doorway, in ridges of pure white. A great many sleighs were waiting outside the fence; there was a pleasant, unchurchly jingle in the air, as the cold horses shook themselves, or pranced about, arching their necks under the strings of bells that circled them. Close by the gate was an especially fine turnout, opulent with buffalo robes and white horsehair plumes. Its spirited horses pawed the snow, and switched their flowing tails nervously; the coachman who held the reins found it difficult to keep them standing. It was Mr. Hendricks Cortlandt's sleigh, and people paused to watch him take possession of it.

He turned to young Hendricks, who stood stiffly waiting beside his mother. "Like to ride up with me?" he asked him. It was a long established custom of his, to drive his nephew home from church on Sunday.

"Yes, sir," the boy said, relieved. He would have climbed into the back seat, had his uncle not restrained him.

"In front, Hendricks, if you please,—with Tom. Ann rides with me."

With a quick clean spring the country child was established, and Mr. Cortlandt followed her with a somewhat malicious smile. As he tucked the fur robe about her he knew that with so simple an effort he had done much to establish Ann as his favorite.

Behind them the relations, in the Theodore Renneslyer's smart sleigh, were dismally discussing her. "We are fools to allow it!" Mrs. Renneslyer said angrily. "If the girl had looks I declare I should be convinced of the necessity of our taking steps!"

"Yes," agreed Mrs. William, "but what steps, Clarissa?" And for once her sister-in-law had no answer ready.

"I like her," Fanny volunteered from the front seat, where she sat perched on Mr. Renneslyer's knees. "She makes up stories, and we play them, like actors!" Her starry eyes shone at some childish recollection.

"Does Fanny see much of her?"

"More than I like, but Hendricks insists on it." Mrs. William leaned closer to her elegant sister-in-law, and lowered her tone so that the child might not hear. "Ann is very undisciplined,—a shocking example,—and she is a great reader, too."

"A dangerous trait in a woman!"

"Yes, and Hendricks allows her to take any book she likes from his shelves. Yesterday I found her deep in *Jane Eyre!*" Mrs. Cortlandt shuddered, but not from the cold.

"Heaven knows what ideas the girl has in her head!" Mrs. Renneslyer said, tossing hers scornfully.

Her husband swung around, to join in the conversation. "She's not so bad as you women make out," he expostulated. "She's got spirit, by gad. No wonder Hendricks likes that! And I'm not so sure, Clarissa, that you are right about her looks. Those queer big

eyes of hers! Give her time to grow up to 'em, and then see!"

The ladies laughed, for here they were on sure ground. "Don't be more ridiculous than you can help, Theo," his wife said briefly. "You are getting to be a silly old man;—you see beauty in anything feminine!"

Even Fanny tossed her meek head. "Ann pretty?" she echoed. "Oh, Uncle Theo, what an idea!"

"You'll have to find some better reason than that for Hendricks' infatuation."

"Well, by gad, she's fond of the old boy, you know. . . . I sometimes think that she is the only one of the lot of us who is."

"Why, Theodore, we all adore him!" Mrs. Cortlandt cried, scandalized.

"We all revere him, you mean. . . . I suppose, really, Hendricks is a human being, underneath all his formality."

"Nonsense, Theo!"

"You see? Ann thinks he is, I have no doubt, and I'll take odds he likes it."

The women looked at each other uncomfortably; there was more in this conjecture of Theodore Renneslyer than they liked to admit.

When Hendricks came home for dinner he confided to his mother that Mr. Cortlandt expected Ann to call him uncle. "Just like Fanny and me," he added arrogantly. "Some day he'll be sorry, you'll see."

"Hendricks," she said crisply, "it is much more likely to be you who is sorry."

"Why?"

"A child in that house! It is strange, isn't it, to think that he may sacrifice his own flesh and blood for her?"

"Do you mean that uncle may give her all his money?"

Mrs. Renneslyer shrank from this crudity, and lifted a languidly protesting hand. "I said nothing so definite. I only meant to warn you. After all, your future is at stake."

"But he has made a will,—I heard you tell father so last summer,—leaving it all to me."

Hendricks' mother looked at him sharply; she was beginning to find his smugness irritating. "There's one thing you may find out," she said sharply, "and that is that there is many a slip between a will and a codicil." She felt more cheerful after having thus plunged her son into bewilderment; as she went upstairs to lay aside her dolman, she was unreasonably relieved. After all, she told herself, family was the thing that counted with her brother; she was certain that he would never seriously consider supplanting his nephew with a common child of a nobody.

After supper in Washington Square, when Mr. Cortlandt would have settled down to his book, Ann stood stubbornly before him. He looked up, ironically inquiring.

"Why don't those people like me?" she demanded defensively.

"What people?"

"Oh,—those Renneslyers,—that fat boy and his mother,—and Fanny's mother, too."

"Possibly they think that I am growing too fond of you."

Ann shot a sidelong glance at Mr. Cortlandt: no, he was not smiling. "If that is the reason, I don't mind," she declared happily. "I don't want any one to like me,—only you!"

CHAPTER IV

ESCAPADES

Ann never achieved that perfect behavior which she felt was to be expected of her guardian's ward; she was always in scrapes of one sort or another, and yet never did she see her naughtiness ahead of her; it always leapt upon her in the dark, as it were, taking her unawares, and defenseless.

She settled down to work with her governess animated by a firm determination to make the best of it, for, in her early appreciation of Mr. Cortlandt's kindness, she felt that it was almost happiness to submit, for his sake, to something which she found so unpleasant. When Fanny Cortlandt was added to the class, she was half sorry, as her pleasure in the other child's society took the edge off the sacrifice she made her guardian. She hated her governess with a passion which absorbed her; at all her ideas of polite behavior she turned up a nose that nature had equipped all too well for that gesture, and she tormented the unfortunate young woman into a nagging which very nearly drove them both distracted. Nevertheless, she quickly learned all that this first incumbent had to teach her, and was enormously bored at being forced to listen to Fanny's instruction on points which she had already mastered.

It was on a day when the spring call was sounding clearly in the trembling air, that Ann first disgraced herself. Fanny was struggling with the tables of eight. There was a robin on the railing outside the window, and the discouraged instructress was droning on "sixteen—twenty-four—thirty-two." Ann felt that she could not endure it another moment.

"I want," she said, "to get a drink of water."

The governess was a Christian young woman, and she looked up at the uneasy child with resigned despair. "Very well," she said, and continued, "forty—forty-eight."

Out in the hall the door was opened wide, and a great gust of soft air was blowing through the house. Ann instinctively turned toward it; she had no plan as she poked her head out the door, and almost no plan as she ran down the Square, hatless and suddenly mad. She did not pause until she reached Broadway; there, lost in the crowd, she felt safe from pursuit. "Eight—sixteen—thirty-two!" she said aloud, derisively. She wanted to fling her arms about, and shout. Instead she paused, and gaped at a jeweler's window, which was resplendent with sets of coral, and cameos set in pearls. Why did grown people want things like that? Ann wondered, and then she remembered her mother's delight in the jewels her affluent new husband had given her, and understood. . . . She wished that she had something of her mother's to keep. . . . She wondered if all her pretty things had sunk quite to the bottom of the ocean. . . . De-

fensively, she flung away from the window: this was no way to enjoy her freedom!

"Yes, sir," she heard a man say, as he passed with a companion. "Trinity spire is the highest point in New York! Beautiful view from there."

Immediately she knew what she wanted, and she started off down Broadway, undeterred by a knowledge of the miles which stretched between her goal and her. She was a weary child when she at length arrived where the church shepherded its clustering gravestones far away down-town, but it had never occurred to her to give up her quest. The stairs seemed very long and steep as she toiled up them, but once at the top, she exulted over the wide panorama. She strained her young eyes to follow, in the slate-gray sea, the course of a ship that was going, as her mother's ship had gone, out into the unknown; she longed to be aboard it, or in one of the small sailing craft that skimmed about below her, in the ruffled lead color of the river. The city, too, was full of interest; there were countless places which she had not yet seen. The tiny square patches of budding green in the wilderness of houses meant parks whose existence she had not even guessed; the avenues that cut narrow swathes through the city led to enchanted goals for future expeditions. . . . Her eyes ran curiously over the miles of monotonous flat tops of houses, broken, here and there, by the spire of a church, thrust up like a spear above all else. . . . It rested her, to hang on the railing, and speculate about the un-

known in that way; a delightful interest in other people's lives awoke in her, and beguiled her so that she forgot to be apprehensive about her reception in Washington Square, when she should, at last, return.

In after years she never could remember just how she managed to get home again, but she knew that Mr. Cortlandt had forgiven her, and that, after a frank statement of her hopeless boredom during lessons, he had replaced the Christian young lady by an earnest German instructress, who undertook the taming of Ann with a sort of holy fervor, and who for years adored and tyrannized over her in an ecstasy of sentimentality.

Fanny and Ann speedily became intimate; they were thrown together from the beginning, and they complemented each other in a way that was a delight to both of them. Fanny was a timid child, inclined to an unadventurous life which proved monotonous, even to the docile girl herself, while Ann was always a rebel, only too willing to lead her protesting friend into exciting paths she never would have explored by herself. During the first six months of Ann's stay, Fanny was in trouble oftener than she had been in all her life before, but the more ingenious child fascinated her, and she looked at her with adoring eyes. As for Ann, she loved Fanny dearly, and that was all there was about that; her reason was not in the least concerned in the matter.

She never could manage to get on with young Hendricks Renneslyer, although, at her guardian's request,

she made sporadic efforts to establish pleasant relations. He did not like her, and she knew it. He hated anything conspicuous or unconventional, and he complained that his uncle's protégée was both, as, indeed, it must be admitted that she sometimes took pains to be, in his reproving presence. Now and then, in the winters of her childhood, he took her skating in the new Central Park, but Ann knew that it was only because his mother had insisted that he should, and she always wondered why this special favor should be shown her by the coldly beautiful Mrs. Renneslyer. She could skate very well indeed; even before she left Milton Center she could cut her initials on the ice, and there were always plenty of people who watched her on the park lake. She was vastly Hendricks' superior, and she took a malicious pleasure in cutting figures around him. He was a heavy pompous boy in his early adolescence, and he treated Ann as though she were a mere infant; she grinned to herself, in her increasing maturity, as she recalled his clumsy rushes after her, and his impotent protests at the ridiculous position she put him in. She knew that he greatly preferred his cousin Fanny to her, but she did not object to that; what she could not endure was her friend's adoration of him.

It was not until the autumn Hendricks went away to Harvard College that his smoldering resentment flared into open dislike. New York City was at that time in the throes of religious excitement, and Ann was on fire with desire to go to the mushroom prayer-

meetings, which had sprung up in various quarters of the town, and where great crowds of people gathered daily to hear Whitfield's ardent exhortations. She began to think about her soul in those days, and one afternoon her guardian came home to find her crouching over a leaping fire, with fascinated eyes fixed on the blaze.

"What are you doing there, my dear?" he asked.

Ann answered solemnly, "Thinking about hell-fire, uncle."

He laughed, but he would not be cajoled into taking her to hear the revivalist. "I couldn't think of such a thing, Ann, I am too old to expose myself to anything so upsetting. And you can not go alone with Fraulein in that excited crowd, mind that. You'll have to take young Hendricks along, if you must go."

The boy protested hotly.

"Why can't you go to a regular church?" he demanded. "Those prayer-meetings; a lot of common people all singing and shouting! Grace Church is good enough for me."

He found the revivals even worse than he had feared. He hated the crude emotion of them, and shrank from the uncontrolled ecstasy of conversion and repentance, while Ann, on the contrary, thrilled to the dramatic exaltation about her. He twitched her coat nervously when she lifted her clear voice in the hymns; it rang out pure and sweet; she liked to hear it, and to be a part of the great moved audience.

It made no difference to her if people turned to stare at her.

She was immensely interested in the personal prayers offered by members of the congregation. The intrepid person thus inspired wrote his plea upon a piece of paper, folded it, handed it to an usher, and at a later period in the service had the hectic pleasure of hearing his words read out before all the crowd. Ann longed to ask a boon, and searched her brain for days for something she might demand, but it was not until she came very near the turning, on this road to salvation, that she hit on her appeal. Standing well away from young Hendricks, she managed, before he could stop her, to slip into the hand of an usher a piece of paper upon which was written, in a round schoolgirl's hand, "Prayers are earnestly requested for a boy who thinks himself as good as God."

A few moments later, when this was read out by the trusting minister of the gospel, Ann was unable to suppress the pride of authorship, and turned, in a flutter of excitement, to the stolid youth beside her.

"It's you, Hendricks," she cried, "it's you!" And thus effectively demolished any chance of the young man's conversion.

It was after this that Mr. Cortlandt had laid a ban on further attendance at the prayer-meetings, and young Hendricks shortly after went away to college. It seemed to Ann entirely unreasonable that the boy

and his mother should resent her prayer, and look on it as a sinister attack, but somehow, without being told, she was certain that they did.

The one sure thing she could anchor all her memories to, was the indelible fact of her guardian's affection for her, and as she grew older she developed a keen desire to reward him for it. It was mainly for his sake that she wished to be pretty. She was, she supposed, clever enough; at any rate, the aunts referred to her scornfully as a blue stocking, and at fifteen she was often aware of knowing more about her lessons than Fraulein did, while the musical young lady who taught her the piano assured her that in spite of her slapdash method she was better at her pieces than painstaking Fanny. Every one knew that she could ride any horse, however wild, and swim through the heavy surf at Newport, but all these advantages weighed as nothing in the balance against her lack of good looks. She hated her slender height, and her impudent nose, and her too thin arms.

It is true that sometimes, when she looked in the tall mirror over her bureau, it seemed to her that her face was somehow growing up to her eyes, and that her red lips were less incongruous in the warm white of her face, but as her ideal was at that time a plump, pink and white young lady with glossy black ringlets, like Clara Louise Kellogg's in *Rigoletto*, she was unaware of any growing beauty. Moreover, her mother's adverse judgment of her clung,—that mother whom she tenderly recalled as a miracle of prettiness, and in

addition to this, the stigma upon red hair had not then been removed, and Mrs. William's estimate of her flaming mane reached her through Fanny.

"It is such a pity," that brown-toned young woman said, "that it does not grow darker. Mama says you will never get you a husband on account of it."

Ann tossed her despised head. "La!" she exclaimed. "Who cares?" Her voice, however, was dispirited. At fifteen she had known no men, and as for the boys she met at occasional children's parties,—she resented their sleek good manners almost as much as they did her tomboy ways, and Fanny, who danced but passably well, had more partners than light-footed Ann.

It was about this time that she grew rebellious at being considered a child. She had not dropped, with other childish ways, her early habit of pretending, but gradually her dreams had altered their character. She was no longer a wild red Indian,—a dashing sailor,—a swashbuckling soldier. Furtively, persuasively, a change had come, and she enrolled herself as a lovely princess; . . . a second Helen of Troy; . . . a much sought belle and beauty. She lived each book she read, as heroine, and often shed secret tears over the tragic plights to which she reduced herself. If any one had called her romantic she would have denied it with an indignation that would have been largely protective, but as a result of the richness of her inner life she longed for wider emotional horizons. She and Fanny talked much of coming out into gay New York society, and she speculated a great deal about

the dinner parties and evening receptions her guardian so often disappeared to enjoy; it was quite in vain that he told her she missed very little; she continued to watch his departures with wistful eyes.

Her immaturity did not become unbearable to her, however, until the Japanese Embassy visited New York. Those first diplomats from mysterious lands across the wide Pacific were objects of general curiosity; the newspapers heralded them, and people flocked to see them. Ann plagued Mr. Cortlandt with questions about them.

"Are they really so small?" she demanded. "And have they slit eyes, like the Japanese doll you gave me when I first came? Do they actually wear dresses, like women? Are they yellow? How yellow? Are they interesting?"

Her guardian laughed. "They are not," he declared. "They smile and say nothing, and I smile, and say nothing, and it is all a great bore."

"But Joseph says you are going to entertain them; —you are to give them a reception!"

He sighed. "Unfortunately, I am. . . . Some one had to do it, and four of us drew lots for it, at the Century Club. I lost."

"You won, you mean!"

She ran to tell Fanny the great news, and amazed that good child by declaring her intention of going down-stairs to mingle with the guests.

"You can't do that, Ann. Uncle would never allow such a thing, at your age!"

"Wait and see," Ann boasted. "I am sure he will want us to be there."

He did not, however, as the ladies of his family were united on the impropriety of such conduct, and Ann was forced to confine her observations of the swarthy men in their gorgeous Eastern clothes to such glimpses as she could snatch when hanging over the stair rail, in a rage of curiosity and disappointment. Looking down, her eyes lighted on the top of Mr. William Cullen Bryant's head; it was unmistakable; no one's else was so massive and so bald, nor had such a bush of grizzled hair flowing over the coat collar behind, almost as long as the great gray beard in front. Ann knew him well, for he was often at her guardian's house; she liked him both because he sometimes read his poems aloud, so beautifully that they sounded like music, and because he walked back and forth to his newspaper office in all sorts of weather. She had little use for indoor people, and when it rained she liked to think of the hearty old man, with his head bent to the storm; she had a feeling of kinship to him. She made a curious sibilant noise against her teeth, and the poet looked up quickly, and laughed. He was carrying in one hand a plate of escalloped oysters, and in the other a bright red apple.

"May I come up?" he called softly.

"Oh, do!" Ann whispered back, undeterred by Fanny's aghast plucking at her skirts. She made no false apologies at accepting the oysters he offered her. The apple he reserved for himself.

"I was intending the oysters for a somewnat more mature lady," Mr. Bryant said, "but if she knew their fate, she would not, I am sure, regret them."

Ann lifted a skeptical face. "Hum," she said, "better not tell her, though. . . . Have one, Fanny,—they're good."

Their benefactor laughed, and set his apple down on the step beside Ann. "I'll go fetch some more," he offered, "and we children will all have supper together."

"Well," commented Ann dryly, "if you want to play that you're a child, this is the place to come. . . . Don't you think it's mean?"

"Mean?"

"Yes,—not to let us go down there, and meet those Japanese? I've never seen one, near to,—and Japan is a long way off."

Mr. Bryant laughed again, in an incomprehensible, mature fashion, and sauntered off down-stairs. . . . Ann finished her oysters; shared with Fanny, there were not very many. . . . She looked over the rail again, but this time the hall was empty. "Can't see a thing," she complained. Her bitter look fell on the poet's frugal supper. "Aren't grown people queer?" she demanded. "An apple!" She held it up scornfully. "And he can have anything he wants! It's an awful waste!"

She looked up to see Mr. Bryant returning, laden with more plates of escalloped oysters. Behind him was a diminutive young man, in a saffron robe em-

broidered in rose color, carrying ice-cream. The children scrambled to their feet; they were tongue-tied with shyness; for once even Ann had nothing at all to say, but it became evident that it was just as well, as the stranger made no effort to speak, either. He bobbed his shorn black head, and smiled, and they did the same, and presently the four of them were seated on the stairs, Mr. Bryant munching his apple, while the young people devoured ice-cream and sponge cake. In spite of the fact that he was unable to tell them so, the girls divined that this was the Oriental's first introduction to these delicacies, and they beamed sympathetically upon him, unaware that Mr. Bryant looked at them with much the same kindly expression, as he turned their defeat into a triumph.

CHAPTER V.

ROYALTY

It was in the autumn following Ann's sixteenth birthday that the Prince of Wales made his historic visit to America. He was, at that time, unquestionably the most romantic figure in the world, and the tremendous affair of his crossing the Atlantic Ocean was made much of. His stay in Canada, his happy and gracious responses to official greetings, his delightful enthusiasm and delicious naiveté, were all recorded at great length in the New York newspapers, and wood-cuts of his candid and temperamental young face were to be found looking out of every magazine. When it was finally announced that he was actually coming to visit the United States, and would spend a few days in New York, the excitement among fashionable people ran high, and the plans made for his entertainment were of a more metropolitan order than ever attempted before. There was to be a parade, a public ball was to be given for him at the Academy of Music, and a dinner and reception were arranged for at the Brevoort Hotel. This plan left but one evening free, and after some discussion it was decided that Mr. Cortlandt, who was chairman of the committee in charge of the prince's visit, should entertain him at a private banquet. Ann was in a great state of excitement at the prospect of having the prince at dinner.

"We shall both fall in love with him!" she told Fanny ecstatically.

"Well, anyway," said Fanny, "mama says I may make my début at the ball. She is getting me a pink tarlatan dress for it."

"Then I shall go, too! I shall ask your mother to order me a dress like yours."

When she did so, Mrs. William looked at her in ruffled amazement. "Ball?" she echoed, "at sixteen? Stuff and nonsense!"

"But Fanny is going."

"Fanny is seventeen:—and at any rate, miss, it is high time you learned that there are some things Fanny should have, and you shouldn't."

The girl took this blow in silence. She was staggered by Mrs. William's belief that her daughter, as a bona-fide member of the illustrious Cortlandt family, had a divine right to certain privileges denied to Ann Byrne, once of Milton Center. It seemed fair enough, however, when she considered it dispassionately, and this realization threw her into a panic. If her guardian agreed with his sister-in-law, she didn't want to know it; she wished to live in her fool's paradise as long as she could, and she could not bring herself to mention the ball to him, although she cherished a secret hope that he might issue an ultimatum to the effect that she was to go. He did not speak, however, and on the great night she even brought herself, in her new humility, to watch the affair of Fanny's dressing.

The pale rose tarlatan gown was charming, with its

wide ruffles caught, here and there, by tiny bunches of rose-buds; the débutante looked very pretty as she stood tremulously awaiting her shawling. Her sleek brown hair was circled by a flat wreath of shining green leaves, and a little round bouquet trembled in her gloved hands.

"It is too bad, Ann," she murmured compunctiously, as her mother hurried her off to the coach which waited, like Cinderella's, to bear her to the prince's ball.

Ann cried a little before she went to sleep that night, for she felt herself an outcast, and she awakened very early, to hear the home-coming carriages roll through the Square. She crept to the window and looked out; the night was drearily breaking into morning; it was the first dawn. She wondered what the prince was like. . . . It was small consolation to know that Fanny would probably only have bowed before young Albert Edward; Ann had dreamed of floating about the ballroom in his arms, their steps matched in the elegant polka, and she felt that, could she have been there, in some miraculous way endowed with beauty and with charm, she would have achieved it. It was her imagination's heights that she missed, not Fanny's poor successes.

It was on the following evening that the prince was to dine with Mr. Cortlandt, and Ann came down to breakfast determined to carry her disappointment through magnificently. Unfortunately, early as she

was, Mrs. Cortlandt was before her: it was incredible that the woman, after spending the night ranged against a chilly wall, watching, with anxious eyes, for Fanny's partners, could be up and out in time to come bustling into her brother-in-law's sunny breakfast room, full of plans for the evening's entertainment. She had already interviewed the cook, and when Ann came in she was saying, "We shall have oyster stew, of course, Hendricks, and she does lobster so well that I decided on that, but I couldn't sleep last night, after I finally got home, worrying for fear we should have had terrapin. . . . Do you think we made a mistake?"

Mr. Cortlandt smiled. "No," he said, "he'll get all the terrapin he can eat in Baltimore and Washington. . . . Good morning, my dear. You are as late as though you had gone to the ball."

Ann stooped and kissed him. "I couldn't seem to go to sleep," she said unsteadily.

"You might as well have spent the night dancing. . . . By the way, why didn't you go? I had no idea that Fanny would be there until I saw her. You should have gone with her."

Ann flung a triumphant glance at Mrs. Cortlandt. "I thought you didn't want me to go," she murmured. She was tremulous in her joy at being reinstated.

"Nonsense! Don't I always want you? How about to-night? You are coming to the dinner, of course?"

"Hendricks, don't be absurd! A child like Ann at a formal dinner party! For the Prince of Wales! Why, even Fanny isn't to be here!"

"Oh, uncle, may I come?"

"Hendricks, it isn't possible, at this hour. . . . The table is full, and pulled out as far as it will go. The dining-room won't hold any more people. . . . Besides, Ann has no proper dress."

Mr. Cortlandt smiled ruefully at his ward. "The Fates seem to be against us, my child. . . . I should have inquired; it was careless of me, but I don't understand why you didn't tell me if you wanted to come. It could have been quite easily arranged."

Ann smiled mistily at him. "Never mind," she said softly. "So long as you want me to be there, it's all right." She escaped from the breakfast room and the details of the dinner as soon as she could, however, for Fanny's mother's triumph over her was more than she could bear. She wished that she might go away somewhere until everything was over, and the prince had gone. A lump rose in her throat at the realization of her needless disappointment, and she flung on her hat and jacket, determined to get away from a house dominated by Mrs. Cortlandt.

On the door-step she met a servant in livery. He touched his hat, and offered her the note he carried. "From Mrs. Vanderdyken," he said, and departed.

Ann's eyes widened. Mrs. Vanderdyken, she knew, was expected at the dinner, and she guessed, immedi-

ately, that something must have happened to prevent her coming. Into her mind came a daring idea, and her lips pressed together firmly, as the glorious possibilities of it developed. Her eyes were black in her white face. She tore open the note: her intuitions had been correct; the elegant Mrs. Vanderdyken had sprained an ankle, and was forced to send her regrets, at this late hour. Ann hesitated a moment longer on the door-step,—it was the hesitation of one who plans, not one who fears,—and then she darted away in the direction of the little house in Eleventh Street, where she had, the night before, assisted Fanny Cortlandt to dress for the ball. People turned to look at her as she sped through the streets, swift, and possessed, and absorbed.

The maid who answered the door told her that Miss Fanny still slept, but Ann persisted. "I'll come in," she said, and she smiled radiantly at the girl. "I won't wake her. I'll just go up and wait."

She crept up the narrow stairs along the wall, holding her breath when now and then they creaked under her careful feet. The bedroom door was shut, and a heavy silence lay on the upper floor; after an instant's pause, Ann turned to the little dressing-room where Fanny had arrayed herself. The finery she had laid aside after the ball was carelessly bestowed upon the chairs and couch; it lay heaped together,—the pair of prim little pink slippers, the wreath of leaves for the hair, the long silk stockings, the faded bouquet, and,

collapsed into themselves in a corner, the hoops that had distended the glory of the festive gown, now hanging limp, without its crinoline, across a chair.

Ann wasted no time in observation. She seized the unwieldly hoop-skirt with a firm but feminine hand, and using its gaping interior as a carpet bag, she hastily crammed into it the pink tarlatan dress, the little pink slippers and the stockings, the wreath of leaves for the hair, and the fluffy white petticoats. In a moment the deed was done, and she confronted the problem of transporting her plunder from Eleventh Street to Washington Square. She admitted to herself that the sight of a great girl of sixteen bearing a naked hoop-skirt through the streets of New York was not to be considered, royalty or no royalty.

After cautious reconnoitering she ventured out into the hall with her unwieldy bundle. Then, taking her courage in both hands, she stole down the stairs, holding the great balloon of the hoop out before her, and, noiselessly opening the front door, she succeeded in pushing the unwilling skirt through the opening, and the vestibule was reached. Eleventh Street lay before her, long and empty and observant; Ann felt eyes lurking behind every pair of prim window curtains, and she almost lost her courage. The only vehicle in sight was a fish cart, which had paused before the house while the man bargained with Mrs. William's cook at the rear door below. Ann leaned, and listened; she caught sounds of a conversation that promised to be lingering, so she carefully deposited her treacherous

bundle on the floor, and started cautiously down the high steps. Immediately behind her the hoops collapsed; a pink slipper skimmed past her, and ricochetted to the curb. Ann pursued it; she stood beside the fish cart when she again had it in her hand. She cast a quick but innocent glance over the sleeping house-front, and then she lifted the cover of the cart and peered within, as though consumed with dutiful interest in her aunt's dinner. The box was very nearly empty. At one end of the malodorous space a few lobsters lurked, draped with seaweed, and that was all. She glanced at the areaway, and caught the sound of laughter, and her mind was made up. It was the work of a moment to re-collect Fanny's finery, and to repack the hoop. Clasping it in her slender young arms, she started down again, feeling cautiously for each step, under the enormous burden of the crinoline. Her breath fluttered in her throat, and she laughed nervously to herself, although the situation did not strike her as in the least funny. With a desperate earnestness, she assaulted the fish cart with the hoop-skirt, and gradually the thing yielded; it elongated itself sufficiently to begin to enter the box of the wagon, and then it became but an affair of muscle, and the deed was done! When the fish man emerged from the areaway, he found a breathless young lady just closing, with a firm hand, the door of his cart.

"I see," she said, in a high strained voice, "that you have some fine lobsters this morning."

"Yes'm," replied the fish man laconically. He was

not an observant individual. "Can I show them to ye?"

"Oh, no, thank you. I have looked at them. Will you kindly bring them around to 23 Washington Square? I think Mr. Cortlandt's cook will want them."

The fish man brightened, for Washington Square trade was worth wheeling his cart some distance to secure. "Thank ye, miss, I'm sure," he said, and he got himself into his shafts without more ado.

Ann had feared further neighorbood traffic, but the fact that his supply was so nearly exhausted saved her; the little procession of the fish cart in the street, and the girl on the sidewalk proceeded unmolested.

When the man paused before Mr. Cortlandt's door Ann was a little way behind him, she quickened her steps with an effect of pursuit, and arrested him as he would have opened the box where his lobsters lay.

"Oh!" she cried. "Wait a moment! There is a lady just around the corner who wants to speak to you. I think she wants to buy something from you."

The fish man straightened himself alertly; it seemed an extraordinarily lucky morning for the sale of his wares.

"Around the corner, did ye say, miss?"

Ann had now come up to him. She stood with her hand on the door of his little wagon. "Yes," she said positively, "just around the corner,—the first

house. . . . I'll watch your wagon while you are gone,—but you had better hurry."

He went at once, with a touching trust in the imperious young lady who was controlling his destinies. As for Ann, she cast one imploring look over the façade of her guardian's house, and then tore open the door of the wagon. A burst of crinoline sprang out at her, and she laid violent hands upon it. She tugged, and it resisted; she coaxed, and it sprang back again, and in the meantime, the plodding fish man neared the corner. She gave a despairing pull, and all at once the entire skirt leaped upon her, scattering various articles of Fanny's apparel to the four winds of Washington Square. The fish man rounded the corner,—thank heaven he had not looked back!—and the house-front still beamed kindly down on her. She disengaged a clinging lobster from a rib of the hoop, and fled incontinently into the areaway. Contrary to rules, the door was not locked, and she plunged headlong into the haven of her guardian's house.

The bewildered fish man, on returning fruitlessly from the corner, found his cart deserted, and the doors gaping. On appealing to the cook in behalf of his lobsters, he received only the irritated refusal of a temperamental genuis engaged in a masterpiece; he made no sales in Washington Square that day, and as for the strange young lady,—he never set eyes on her again. However,—and this is the most curious part of his experience,—when he came to clear out

his wagon, he found, shining bright among the seaweed, a bright new dollar, and, wound about the last remaining lobster, a long pink silk stocking that was surely an exotic in a fish cart!

At half after six o'clock that night Mrs. Cortlandt was nervously awaiting the arrival of His Royal Highness,—and Mrs. Vanderdyken. The other guests were there, decorously assembled before young Albert Edward should enter, and Mrs. William was by no means certain how she should manage the situation if the lady's entrance followed that of the prince. She cast agitated glances at her calm brother-in-law, and it was with tremendous relief that she heard a little stir in the hall. She turned with an effusive welcome on her lips to greet the delayed guest.

The door swung fully open, but Joseph's voice did not sound the glorious name of Mrs. Vanderdyken in the ringing British fashion which, in the morning, she had instructed him to adopt. Instead the horrified Mrs. William caught the unmistakable sound of a chuckle. There was a faint murmur of excited movement without, and then the doorway was filled by a vision of youth and beauty that was bewilderingly familiar, and irritatingly different, but that was assuredly not Mrs. Vanderdyken. Ann, elegant and suddenly lovely, her rich hair piled on her small head, her wide pink skirts spreading out from a miraculously slim waist, leaned confidentially toward her.

"Mrs. Vanderdyken has sprained her ankle," she murmured low, "and I am taking her place."

She caught her guardian's eye, and swept past the astonished hostess, into the midst of the guests. It was too late to stop her, but it was possibily as well for the decorum of the prince's dinner party that the full enormity of the girl's act did not immediately dawn on Mrs. William; it was some time before she recognized in Ann's charming costume the dress which she had, with so much care, prepared for her Fanny to wear to the prince's ball.

Mr. Cortlandt looked at Ann with twinkling eyes; he was amused at her defiance, and delighted at the sudden revelation of her beauty. Ann saw at once that she should have nothing to fear from him, and she drew a quick breath of relief. He comprehended the situation immediately, and explained, as he paternally circled the drawing-room with her, that, in the sudden emergency of Mrs. Vanderdyken's ankle, he had allowed his ward to come to the table, in spite of the fact that she was not yet "out." She had no more than politely greeted the ladies present, when the prince was announced, and the little excitement of her arrival was over. She stood modestly at one side, watching the flurried curtsies of the New York matrons, and wondering, nervously, if the sachet she had tucked into her bodice was sufficiently strong to overcome an odor of fish that clung mysteriously about her. She felt no concern about her bare young neck and arms, beautifully white above her pink tarlatan, but she bent her knees a trifle, under Fanny's short skirts, so that the horrid secret of her cotton stockings might not be

exposed to a censorious world: only the tips of her slippers showed beneath her crinoline,—silken and irreproachable.

She had a few moments' talk with the prince, after the dinner was over. He came across to her, and asked why he had not seen her at the ball.

"Because I was not there," she answered demurely. "I am too young."

"But you are here?"

Ann looked at him with speculative eyes. "I have a great mind to tell you how that happened," she said daringly, and in response to his urging she did tell him all the disgraceful story of the fish cart. The heir to the throne of England laughed so much that Mrs. William came to take him away, and Ann had only a word with him again as he was leaving.

"I wish you had been at the ball," he said, taking her hand cordially as she regained her poise after a somewhat shaky curtsey. "In Canada they made me dance with all the old chaps,—but here I could choose the prettiest girls. I am sure you must dance beautifully. Good-by,—I shall never forget the fish cart!"

Mr. Cortlandt was very kind to her; she had been right in thinking herself forgiven. He soothed Mrs. William's justifiable irritation with promises of new frocks for Fanny, and he admitted Ann's plea that she was now grown up. It was decided that she might make her début on her seventeenth birthday, only six months away.

"Silly little moth!" he said sadly. "Some day, my dear,—some day you will look back, and say it was a wise old man who told you that childhood was not such a bad time. . . . But then it will be too late!"

Thus did Ann snatch victory from defeat, but it was not of her approaching majority that she thought, as she dreamily removed Fanny's gorgeous raiment. Instead she tremulously recalled the eager look in the eyes of the English boy, as he told her he wished she had been at the ball, because there he had danced with the prettiest girls; and the tempo of her inner consciousness was quickened by dreams of royal marriages, red carpets and crown jewels.

CHAPTER VI

WAR AND A DÉBUT

MOMENTOUS things happened in the winter before the opening of the Civil War, and Ann Byrne spent a thrilling six months hearing them discussed. Night after night a number of her guardian's friends met in the library of the Washington Square house to talk over the affairs of the day, and the girl almost always managed to be included in the group; she became a pet of Charles A. Dana, who was amused at her unfeminine interest in politics, and delighted in drawing her into the discussion.

Sympathy for the cause of the South centered in New York, for a good proportion of the newspapers in town defended the doctrine of secession, and feeling ran high. In the beginning, Mr. Cortlandt himself believed that any state had the right to secede from the Union if its people voted to do so, but he was unalterably opposed to any extension of slavery. As for Ann, she read *Uncle Tom's Cabin* four times in as many months, and became as violent an abolitionist as any of her guardian's friends who came over from New England to argue their beliefs with the more temperate New Yorkers. Over at the Renneslyers', the atmosphere was very difficult. Hendricks' father delighted in defending the complaisant administration at Washington, and Ann was amazed at Mr. Cortlandt's pa-

tience in listening to him. She tried very hard, on her part, to maintain dignified relations which should signify disapproval, but was unable to do so, because Mr. Renneslyer simply would not have it; always after he had fallen out with her, he would make it his business to regain her favor. His public rejoicing over the general election in New England and New York State, which followed the national election, and showed a marked increase of secession strength, cost him a pair of parlor skates, and his participation in an anti-interference mass meeting, a visit to Barnum's Museum. Ann was by no means proof against such seductive measures to gain her favor, and they wandered among the animals and the freaks as happy as two children, admiring the wild beasts and marveling at the minuteness of twenty-four-inch Commodore Nutt. The girl liked to go out with Mr. Renneslyer. His flamboyant looks amused her; his luxuriant side-whiskers, parted and brushed back, shone with pomade, and his ties and collars were always the most extreme of their kind. She could not help liking him, although she could not understand this weakness in her guardian.

From the time she first heard of him Ann had been a champion of Abraham Lincoln, although she could not have said why. Certainly she got none of her enthusiasm from the people about her, for even Mr. Cortlandt had a New Yorker's distrust of a leader from the rural West. She overheard Mrs. Renneslyer say to Fanny's mother, "The girl likes the creature

because he comes from the same sort of unspeakable environment that she did." Sometimes Ann wondered if she were not right. She was aware of a sense of kinship with the plain Illinois politician; she felt sure that they knew the same things about life, and that, owing to the hard country upbringing they had in common, they were more deeply wise than the sophisticated men and women who surrounded her.

When the news of Mr. Lincoln's nomination reached New York, Ann was the sole member of a gathering at her guardian's house who did not regret his success. "My ward," Mr. Cortlandt had said, smiling somewhat wryly, "is a great admirer of the rail splitter. She has never agreed with the rest of us in our belief that Mr. Seward is the man to save the situation." Ann was somewhat embarrassed, but she was proud of herself, too, and of her capacity to pick a winner.

The election of Abraham Lincoln was the signal for greater defiance on the part of the Cotton States, and much uneasiness was felt as to the future. Ann always remembered a solemn conference of her guardian's friends in regard to an editorial by Mr. Greeley called "Going to Go," which appeared the second day after the election. In it he deplored the idea of disunion, but stated his belief that if the people of any state, after due deliberation, voted to secede, the national government had no right to question the action.

"You are right, Greeley," said Mr. Cortlandt. "Of course you are right. We all agree to that,—but it's

a pretty complicated thing, this withdrawal from the Union, and your editorial is sure to give a lot of comfort to the South." He was entirely correct in this assumption, for less important papers followed the great man's lead, and the secessionists were mightily cheered.

In December South Carolina finally took the greatly discussed step, and withdrew from the United States. This move had been so long anticipated that it was received with surprising calm, but a few days later the North awoke to a real shock on hearing that Major Anderson, who was stationed in Charleston Harbor, had retired from the untenable Fort Moultrie to Fort Sumter, which was, he stated, better prepared to withstand attack. This news was quickly followed by the announcement that the secretary of war had resigned, because President Buchanan had refused to order Anderson back to Moultrie, and ugly stories began to leak out of late transfers of government arms and munitions to the Southern States. After this there was appreciably less talk, in the North, of conciliation or compromise. Immediately after Anderson's move the federal arsenal at Charleston was seized by volunteer troops acting under state authority, together with all the harbor and island defenses, except Sumter. Without a protest from the secessionists who filled the offices, the custom house and the post-office were also taken over by the state government, and the flag of South Carolina was raised over them on December thirty-first.

Before many weeks five other Southern States had seceded, while in New York the men who were friendly to the South were openly triumphant. Mr. Cortlandt was very unhappy in those days, for he was torn between his judgment and his emotions: he used to tell Ann that he envied her her whole-souled intolerance of the slave-holders. "It is a terrible thing to sit here in New York, comfortable and impotent, and watch this great country torn apart," he said. "I am sorry that I have lived to see it."

Arsenals, forts and revenue cutters were taken over almost daily during the last weeks of December, 1860, and early in the new year a ship sent to bring supplies to Fort Sumter was fired on, and forced to turn back. The political complexion changed rapidly in the North, and the very people who had lamented Mr. Lincoln's election because the South looked on it as a threat, now deplored the fact that he did not come out in belligerent pronunciamentos against the Seceding States. It was a time when events moved rapidly, and opinions reversed overnight.

In January Mayor Wood, encouraged by the clamor of the pro-secessionists, recommended to the common council that the city of New York, too, should secede, and become a free town. This amazing suggestion aroused the indignation and the ridicule of every one; and newspapers which had been advocating the southern point of view became, in consequence of this general change of opinion, appreciably less partizan. Many of the pro-secessionists came over to the other camp,

—among them, to Ann's great delight, Theodore Renneslyer. In spite of this swing of public sentiment, however, not a month passed before forty thousand merchants signed a petition to the president urging a peaceful settlement of the national difficulties, and the Chamber of Commerce appointed a delegation to take it, in a body, to Washington.

All these efforts to stem the overwhelming tide were in vain. As the spring drew on, Major Anderson's situation in Fort Sumter grew critical, and civil war, until recently a thing which might be argued about, loomed close and passionate. Ann found the prospect of it so exciting that she almost forgot her approaching début. It was with a divided mind that she ordered her new frocks, and her bonnet which the milliner assured her was an exact copy of the one worn by the beautiful Empress Eugenie.

In February a convention of the Seceded States was called in Montgomery, Alabama, where a provisional framework of the Confederate States of America was adopted, and Jefferson Davis was elected president. His inaugural address antedated Abraham Lincoln's by a trifle more than a fortnight.

On the whole, apathetic incredulity was the sentiment which seemed most widely diffused in the North, but there were still optimists who hoped for a peaceful solution. "As long as they haven't fired on the flag, I don't see why we should worry," Mrs. Renneslyer said repeatedly, regardless of Ann's impatience, or her brother's stern silence.

Mr. Cortlandt went over to Washington for the inauguration, and would have taken Ann with him, had not an inconvenient and belated attack of measles kept her at home. He left some days before the event, as he wished to consult with various people in the capital, and he arrived to hear that Brigadier-General Twiggs, Commander of the United States troops in the Department of Texas, had turned his entire army over to the seceding state government, together with all equipment and munitions in his control.

"This is the final touch," Mr. Cortlandt wrote Ann. "One-half the total military force of our country is in what we must call enemy hands. . . . Washington is in a state of terror. Invasion may be looked for at once, in case of trouble, and the loyal senators and congressmen agree with me that all rests in the hands of Abraham Lincoln. I wish I felt, as you instinctively do, that he has the capacity to handle the situation. . . . In his Indianapolis speech he has indicated that he considers it within the rights of the United States to hold and retake her forts and other property. I fully agree with him in this. Please God he has the resolution and fortitude to live up to this sentiment; in voicing it he has shown greater courage than any other political leader, including Mr. Seward, whose nomination I so earnestly desired."

When he came back to New York, Ann found him in a much more hopeful state. He thought highly of the inaugural address, and he had met and talked with the new president, and advised with him in regard to

some of his appointments. "He is a shrewd man," he told the girl, "shrewd, and able, and something more. . . . He has a gift of speech, but that is not all. . . . He is a great humanitarian, and a dreamer. . . . It may be that he will prove the man for the hour. But what an hour! It will take all his humor, and all the jokes he can extract from his professional funny men."

"Uncle, don't you think that I had better postpone my party until all this trouble is over?" She wondered why he looked at her for so long a time, before he answered her.

"No, my dear. . . . Youth. . . . We shall have the party as planned, no matter what comes after."

Ann beamed radiantly upon him. "And perhaps by the thirteenth of April everything will be all right again," she said hopefully.

Throughout the latter part of March and the early part of April it looked as if Ann's optimistic judgment was justified, for nothing of great importance happened. The invitations to her début were engraved, and deliberately delivered by the ladies of the family, who drove about in the warm, early spring sunshine, leaving them at the houses of their friends. If Mr. Cortlandt was but half-hearted in sharing in these preparations, he did not say so, and only Ann knew that he was not relieved at the lull in political affairs.

It was on the day before the reception that the calm

broke in a most startling manner. Major Anderson had been in communication with Washington, and every one knew that he had requested supplies to be sent to him at once, but no one really believed that the troops of the Confederate States would actually attack; the situation had been a threatening one for so long that people had grown used to it. When, however, the news reached New York that Fort Sumter, flying the American flag, had been fired upon, it lighted the city like a torch. Sympathy with the secessionists was forgotten, or discreetly silenced, and indignation arose shrilly from all quarters of the town. So insistent was the clamor that it seemed almost as if the guns turned on the little fort near Charleston could be heard echoing across New York.

The general impression was, however, that the defenders of the post could easily subdue the attacking party. The papers were full of vainglorious tributes to northern arms and northern courage, and the fashion of the hour was to scoff at this foolhardy attempt of the rebels. Mrs. William suggested, it is true, that it might be well to recall the invitations Mr. Cortlandt had issued, but he indignantly refused to consider such a thing, and Mrs. Renneslyer agreed with him.

"What?" she cried. "Announce to the creatures that we take them seriously! They'll think that we are afraid of 'em, next!"

Therefore, in spite of the fact that the bombardment continued, and that Major Anderson was slow in

crushing the forces attacking him, the preparations for Ann's party went on, and, notwithstanding the troubled times, on the evening of April thirteenth the line of family carriages reached all the way from Mr. Cortlandt's door to Fifth Avenue; even there it turned, like a column of artillery, and stretched away up that aristocratic street almost to the resplendent portals of the Brevoort Hotel.

Ann stood beside her guardian, and in his opinion she was the loveliest thing in all New York, in that budding April weather. Her gown was white, of course, and taking advantage of her unusual height, the dressmaker had given a great spread to the skirts. The girl's slim body and small brilliant head rose above them as above a cloud; she floated, rather than walked. Her hair had not darkened with the passing years; it was as uncompromisingly red as it had been on the day she accompanied her frightened mother to New York. She wore it in a great roll on her neck, and it was drawn smoothly down beside her sensitive, irregular face, in which the lips were so daringly red. Under the parted waves on her forehead her gray eyes seemed almost black; they were Irish eyes, and had in them always a deceptive hint of melancholy.

Mrs. Renneslyer received with her brother on this important occasion, and in spite of her instinctive antipathy to Ann, she was forced to confess that the girl did her guardian credit. She said, very sweetly, to Mr. Cortlandt, that she was extraordinarily lovely. She had written to young Hendricks to come over

from Harvard for his uncle's reception, and she wondered what effect Ann's sudden transformation might have on him. She rather suspected a soft tendency toward love surprisingly implanted in her son,—somehow she had counted upon his inheriting her metallic quality, rather than his father's well-known warm-heartedness,—and she wondered if, after all, this impressionability might not be turned to advantage. The débutante heard of his expected arrival with careless attention, but Mrs. Renneslyer observed that little Fanny Cortlandt spent much more time than usual, that night, over her toilet, and as she slipped about her uncle's rooms, sweetly attending to the comfort of his guests, she thought that there was an unaccustomed color in her cheeks, and that her eyes, which constantly strayed to the door, were unusually bright. She frowned, briefly but decidedly. Fanny was not her idea of a brilliant daughter-in-law.

As the evening wore on, the reception took on more the aspect of a ball. The older men gathered in the doorways, grave-faced above their shirt-fronts, and painstakingly avoided the subject of the bombardment, while the dowagers occupied chairs against the walls, fanned themselves, and whispered that "all this talk of war is fearfully exaggerated," and that "Major Anderson can, of course, hold his own." The young people, irresponsible and gay, took possession of the floor: the house was full of whirling couples. Ann had no lack of partners, and she whispered to Mrs. Renneslyer and Mr. Cortlandt, as they stood, waiting

by the door, that she felt just like a popular young lady in a novel. She smiled into her guardian's eyes when she sashayed toward him, in the figures of the quadrille, and Mrs. Renneslyer shrewdly observed her evident popularity, as, after her pleasant habit, she talked a great amount of smiling nonsense to various young men, and wondered, audibly, at her son's non-appearance.

It was almost midnight when Fanny Cortlandt told her aunt, with a little gasp of relief, that young Hendricks had arrived, and almost immediately he appeared in the doorway. He had grown somewhat taller, and his clothes were artfully cut, so that he did not appear frankly fat; his round face was filled with open dismay.

"Why,—what has happened?" his mother said anxiously.

The boy looked about him dazedly, as though for a moment he could not adjust himself to the fact that dancing and gaiety were going on. "You haven't heard, sir,—have you?" he said to his uncle, solemnly. "Fort Sumter has surrendered!"

"Oh!" cried Mrs. Renneslyer shrilly. "That means war!" Her pretty face blanched at the thought.

Mr. Cortlandt stood, for a moment, staggered; then he advanced into the middle of the room, and made an imperative gesture that silenced the musicians. Only one inattentive violin trailed on for an instant, after the others were still, in a foolish travesty of the air.

"My friends," he said, and his cold formal voice

shook, "we have had enough of dancing! Fort Sumter has fallen!"

A hubbub of exclamation arose about him. Young men dropped their clinging partners, and drew together, frowning nervously. A few of the girls showed signs of tender tearfulness, and Mrs. Vanderdyken, who was the mother of four sons, one of whom had recently graduated from West Point, burst openly into tears.

Ann looked at Hendricks with a new respect. "Oh," she cried, "if I were only a boy!"

"Yes," he said importantly, "I shall fight, of course." As he spoke he took in, for the first time, her new maturity, and his face dropped. Of all the strange events of this curiously unreal evening, the change in Ann was perhaps the strangest; there was something about her that awoke his sluggish spirit, something beyond his whispered comment to Fanny, "Why,—Ann's grown pretty!"

In the crowded, overheated room, with its drooping hothouse roses and its flaring lights, a new sentiment was suddenly diffused. Execrations of the South arose on every hand, and threats ripped like bullets across the hum of excited talk. A little group of men burst from the supper room, Mr. Renneslyer in the lead, flushed of face, and noisily threatening; they were louder than any, in their resentment. Ann pressed through the crowd to where the musicians stood idle, their instruments dangling in their hands;

she found the leader with his face flushed, and his fists clenched.

"Mein Gott!" he said to her. "Dot mean I fight!"

She whispered a direction to him, and suddenly the opening strains of *America* rose, high and sweet, over the ardent confusion. Here and there a daring voice took up the words, but a leader was needed, and the song would have died had not Mr. Renneslyer, who was standing near the musicians, chanced to turn his roving eye on Ann's excited face. Without a moment's thought he caught her up in his arms, and swung her to a chair, where she stood above the crowd, tremulous and frightened, until the thrill of the moment caught her again; then she laughed down at Mr. Renneslyer's efforts to lead, and began to sing the words which Mrs. Allen had taught her long ago; they were among the few things in her far-away childhood that she had not forgotten.

"My country, 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of liberty,
Of thee I sing!"

She was curiously exalted, almost as though she were a part of a fighting force. The words, which had never meant anything to her before, were suddenly vitally important. She accented them passionately.

"Long may our land be bright,
With freedom's holy light!"

Before the end every one was singing with her, in a great burst of sound that was strangely satisfying to the emotion of the moment. When it was over she paused, and drooped, suddenly abashed, and there was young Hendricks below her; in his eyes was an expression that bewildered her. He held out both his hands, and she would have jumped lightly down, only he caught her clumsily in his arms, and set her carefully on the floor again. She thought that he was trembling. Or was it she who shivered, nervously?

"Gad, Ann!" he said feelingly. "What a beauty you are!"

She looked at him unbelievingly. "I?" she demanded incredulously. Her amazed face was distinctly provocative.

There had been a sudden sweep of guests toward the door, and in the corner where the musicians had played the two were momentarily alone. The boy was breathing unevenly and hard, as though he were quite carried away by the extraordinary events of the evening. He reached out suddenly, and drew his companion behind the window curtains; meeting no opposition from the startled girl, be bent and kissed her.

CHAPTER VII

A PROMISE

At seventeen the loss of a night's sleep is a comparatively unimportant matter, and no one would have known, the morning after her birthday party, that Ann had not been plunged in dreamless slumber. Instead of that, however, she lay wide-eyed in the dark, the music of *America* running through her head, accompanying her rioting thoughts. From the tangle of them one astonishing fact arose clear: a man had called her beautiful.

She would not frankly face the fact that she had been kissed, and not for worlds would she have admitted to herself why she lay with her hand against her cheek. Her amazement was genuine, but her opinion of herself was not changed by young Hendricks' sudden madness; she looked on his burst of admiration as peculiar to him, and found it extraordinarily endearing. Her opinion of him had subtly changed; she was no longer inclined to find him ridiculous, and she developed, on the instant, a large toleration of his irritating qualities. He was strangely glorified by his approval of her, and so, all unknowing, little Ann Byrne enrolled herself in one of the two great classes into which her sex is divided; her impulse was to respond to love, rather than to withdraw from it.

All night long a multitude of sounds smote her windows, so after a while she abandoned the possibility of sleep, and, wrapping a quilt about her, she leaned, slim and childlike without her crinoline, over the railing of the balcony that ran across the front of the house. There she could hear more clearly the noises of the gathering crowds that swarmed the streets, fired by the despatches from Sumter, and eager to swallow the entire South at a gulp. Over the undertone of the city, Ann heard shouts; now and then she caught the sound of a song, and once a far-away strain of instrumental music. The Square was deserted, but as she watched she saw a stealthy pair come loitering along the sidewalk, with clinging arms and lagging feet. At the next house they paused, and the girl, leaning curiously over her railing, could see how they still lingered, and how eagerly the woman lifted her face to the man's slow kiss.

"The baggage!" Ann murmured. She impulsively drew back into the house, but her retreat was protective rather than rebuking. She felt bruised and breathless; womanhood was coming upon her too fast. Inside the house again, she determinedly tried to think of the momentous fact that Fort Sumter had been captured, but instead she found herself recalling the expression on young Hendricks' face when he said that she had grown to be a beauty. Over the trees in Washington Square the dawn soared up on rose and silver wings, but Ann found that by closing her own

eyes she could see Hendricks' quite plainly, with their intent and troubling expression.

In the meantime, the young man himself had not been enjoying his usual complacent peace. It is true that his sleep was not interrupted, for Hendricks was not the sort of person to be kept awake by mere emotions, and the Sunday morning church bells roused him about ten o'clock. He awoke with the consciousness that something was wrong, and as he recalled the climax of his eventful evening he was sorry he had left Cambridge and its safe remoteness. He wondered, as he lay blinking at the dazzle of the sunlight reflected from the bowl of water on his washstand to the white ceiling above him, if Ann would tell his uncle that he had kissed her. He writhed uncomfortably on his soft bed at the thought, and then a memory of the girl's amazing prettiness and the satisfaction he had had in kissing her, drove his fears away. And war! The thought came harshly athwart his softer recollections, and abruptly he jumped out of bed. He knew that his mother would expect him to accompany her to church, and he dressed with some expedition. The fact that he would have to sit immediately in front of his uncle and Ann, conscious, all through the service, of their eyes upon him, made him uncomfortable. He brushed his back hair with some precision, in spite of the fact that Mrs. Renneslyer was impatiently calling to him to hurry.

There was a great crowd at church; inside the ushers

had taken an unprecedented step, and allowed strangers to go into pews which were not filled, but in spite of this relief, the congestion at the gate was so great it was with some difficulty that Mrs. Renneslyer maneuvered her great skirts. She paused in the vestibule to shake herself into shape, and to adjust her veil.

"Outrageous!" she kept murmuring. "That rabble, —at church!"

Thanks to Hendricks' delay, the service had already started when they arrived. His mother looked venomously at him, in hopes of bringing the responsibility for this calamity home, but he stalked up the aisle, impervious to her, and absently passed his hand over the back of his head. Mr. Cortlandt sat in the corner of his pew, his white head held stiffly erect, after his manner at divine worship, and Ann was snuggled close beside him. Hendricks could see little of her except the scoop of her brown straw bonnet, with a glint of her chignon below it. The rest of the pew was filled with strange people, obviously, Hendricks thought, not of their class.

Ahead of him his mother stopped abruptly, horror in her attitude, and his father murmured soothingly, "Steady, old girl, steady," just as he did when driving his spirited horse. The boy dragged his eyes from the Cortlandt pew, and saw that the space sacred to the devotions of the Renneslyer family had also been invaded by outsiders; two dispirited young men sat miserably there. Such a thing had never occurred

before, and he was a little frightened, as he had been when a child, at the prospect of an explosion. Nothing happened, however, for, with a withering look at the usher, Mrs. Renneslyer sailed into what was left of her pew, and composed herself for worship; it was as though the lesser clay squeezed in beside her did not exist, except that all through the service she found satisfaction in flouncing movements which repudiated it.

People looked very solemn, Hendricks thought, and they joined in the service with an extraordinary fervor.

Behind him Ann's voice rang distinct and clear in the hymn, and reminded him, first of her song the night before, and then of the revival meetings long ago. He began to dislike her again, under the force of this reminiscence, and he had lost himself in wonder at his behavior at the ball, when the minister gave out the text of the sermon.

"Matthew ten, thirty-four—'Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword'!" Hendricks jumped in his seat, and a flutter of nervous movement agitated the congregation. "I came not to send peace, but a sword." Up above him the minister stood, white-robed and remote, speaking in a deep voice that reached some far place in his soul, and tortured it. "My brethren, this is no ordinary Sabbath; to-day is a momentous one in the history of our nation. Fort Sumter has fallen." Every one inside the church already knew of that appalling

fact, but in spite of that, a suppressed outburst of emotional sounds arose. People coughed, Hendricks could see that ladies were wiping their eyes,—across the aisle his Aunt Emily was quite open about it,—and even his father, hardened sportsman that he was, breathed deep and audibly. His mother seized his arm, and leaned upon him, while she drew her skirts away from the stranger on her left. All over the church there was a murmur of movement.

Hendricks frowned. He hated this atmosphere of hysteria; he wished his mother would let go his arm; he didn't think much of the way the minister was talking, extemporaneously, without his usual sedate notes. . . . Nevertheless, he couldn't help listening. . . . As a matter of fact, he couldn't remember ever listening like that in church before. . . . The old boy evidently believed there would be a war, all right. The prospect had begun to seem remote to Hendricks, but he felt that people were making a good bit of fuss over anything so simple as teaching the southerners a lesson. . . . He would just as soon go to fight, he thought, but he didn't hold with stirring up a fellow like this. . . . He supposed Ann was in a great state over it, being only a silly girl. . . .

He was glad that the sermon, if it could be called that, was a brief one, but he found the hymn following it harder to bear. The music reached into his vitals and twisted them brutally. Behind him Ann's voice soared.

"The Son of God goes forth to war,
A kingly crown to gain.
His blood red banner streams afar,
Who follows in his train?"

What a lot of noise the congregation made!

"They met the tyrant's brandished steel" . . .

It sounded like a multitude singing.

"A noble army, men and boys, . . .
Who follows in their train?"

At last it was over. The boy breathed deep in his relief. He turned half round, and met with Ann's eyes; they were blazing with excitement, but at the same time there was something humid about them, and he swung back reluctantly. She was pretty, he realized, above the tumult of his sensations.

Outside, he found his uncle waiting for him. "I won't take you home with me to-day, my boy. Your mother will want you."

Hendricks flushed. He wondered if this was a rebuff, but decided that the old man's sad eyes were kind. "Perhaps I may see you later," he suggested tentatively.

Mr. Cortlandt shook his head. "Not to-day, I am afraid. There are some gentlemen coming to my house this afternoon, to talk over this war business.

I can not say when we shall be finished. To-morrow, if you please, Hendricks."

Ann did not look at him at all. She stood demurely beside her guardian, tense and remote. She gave the young man only her profile, but he found her irregular little nose charming. He was very gloomy as he dutifully accompanied his parents home, for the giddy sweep of his emotions had left him rather cross.

In the morning he amazed his mother by coming down to breakfast before nine o'clock,—he who ordinarily slept until noon, when the tyranny of chapel at eight was removed from his life. "Where are you off to so early?" she asked.

"I thought I would go over to Uncle Hendricks'," the boy said, flushing. He dumbly resented his mother's penetrating gaze.

"What did you think of Ann?"

Hendricks lifted his cup, drank hastily of the too-hot coffee, and said, "She's pretty."

Mrs. Renneslyer nodded. "She is all of that. . . . Your uncle is devoted to her, Hendricks."

"I know. Queer, isn't it, when she isn't even related to him?"

Mrs. Renneslyer's white fingers played a nervous tattoo on the edge of the table.

"That is the worst of it," she exclaimed. "If Hudson's pocketbook had not been picked up by a pretty fool in Union Park, Hendricks would never have heard of Ann!"

There was a moment's silence, while young Hendricks made havoc with the beefsteak and potatoes. It did not seem to him to be the moment to voice a faint gladness that Ann had not remained buried in the country, far from his ken. His mother looked rather sharply at him, as she continued, "There is no use shutting our eyes to the fact that he adores her. We shall just have to meet it. . . . If she gets it all she will be a great catch."

Hendricks grinned at the idea of Ann Byrne in this light. "I suppose so."

"There will be plenty of suitors,—when people see how devoted your uncle is to her."

"I suppose so."

Mrs. Renneslyer allowed her son to eat in peace for a moment. Then she shot a question unexpectedly across the table at him. "Do you like her, Hendricks?"

The young man flushed again. "She is pretty," he said, appraisingly. "And she is a bit soft on me, I don't mind telling you."

Mrs. Renneslyer looked skeptically at him. Of late a germ of doubt had crept into the perfection of her maternal affection. "What makes you think so?" she demanded, definitely.

Hendricks smiled patronizingly at her, and she with difficulty mastered an inclination to smack him, grown man that he was. "Oh,—a fellow can always tell," he answered vaguely.

"Well," she said crisply, "worse things than that could happen to you!" And with these mystifying words she allowed him to escape.

As he crossed from Union Square to his uncle's house he found the city in a tumult: now that he had grown accustomed to the idea of the fall of Fort Sumter he thought that it was rather silly to be so excited, and he wondered at his own exhilaration on hearing the news. He bought a paper from a boy who was selling them as fast as he could deal them out; in the head-lines he read that the president had issued a call for seventy-five thousand men to enlist in the army.

"Damned nonsense!" he said to a man who also paused to buy. "The New York police could do 'em up! That man Lincoln is scared."

"Scared?" echoed the stranger pugilistically. "I reckon, Bub, he's more'n likely to be mad!"

Hendricks walked on, with an affectation of a great and superior calm. "Bub" indeed,—and only that morning he had cut himself while shaving!

All about him the town clamored for revenge. A rumor was abroad that the Seventh Regiment had volunteered for a month's service, and Hendricks was impressed in spite of himself. In the Seventh was enlisted the flower of the city, and he felt, obscurely, that if the regiment of the New York dandy responded to the call of the rail splitter, there must be something in the man, after all.

In Washington Square he found Ann pouring her guardian's coffee; she handled the big silver urn with a stately little air that impressed him. He looked furtively at her, in her bright green taffeta dress, with a black velvet Greek key pattern on the enormous skirt, and he saw, with a distinct shock, that she was still charming. Unconsciously he had been counting on her returning to her old days of gawky girlhood, and he was unable to cope with this fresh beauty in the morning sunlight. His uncle greeted him with his customary air of preoccupied affection, and Hendricks threw Ann a grateful glance. She did not meet his eyes, however, and he was left with it on his hands.

Mr. Cortlandt smiled across the table at his ward. "You may tell him, Ann," he said.

The girl kindled immediately. "What do you think uncle has done?" she demanded.

"I don't know," the boy answered sulkily. He was cross because she would not look at him.

She flung an announcement at him with the suddenness of a bomb. "He has found you a place in the Seventh Regiment!" she cried triumphantly.

"Ann made me do it," Mr. Cortlandt said, laughing. "I had to send a note over to my friend the colonel before I was dressed!"

"Think of it, Hendricks,—you can fight!" the girl cried. "Oh,—I wish I were a man!"

Her guardian smiled. "Hendricks will fight for you, my dear."

For the first time that morning Ann looked full at the uncomfortable young man.

"Aren't you frightened almost to death that it will be all over before you get there?" she demanded tragically.

His enthusiasm grew under her eager eyes. "How long before we can start?" he asked his uncle.

Mr. Cortlandt frowned impatiently. "I am afraid that it will take four or five days."

"Oh," Hendricks said, crestfallen, "the war will be all over in a week!"

His uncle rose. "We shall hope so," he said dully, and added, "Come with me, Hendricks. I wish to talk with you."

The young man followed him miserably, with reviving fears. He lifted a nervous eyebrow at Ann, on his way to the door, but she was apparently interested only in the contents of her coffee cup, and he left her unreprieved.

In the library, where the flowers from the ball were fading, Mr. Cortlandt faced him with considerable sternness. "I am not satisfied with you, my boy," he said.

Hendricks' face lengthened. "But," he stammered, "I don't know what you mean."

"Your work at Harvard has been poor," his uncle went on, "and at that, I suspect your mother of showing me only your better reports. You have wasted your time at college, and I am not sorry to have you leave. A campaign will harden you, I hope. . . .

You must do me credit, Hendricks. Thirty-five years ago I was an officer in the Seventh."

"Oh," murmured Hendricks, vastly relieved, "I'll do that, of course, sir."

"And when the war is over,—soon, please God,—I want you to understand that you are to come back here to New York, and go to work."

"And my education?"

Mr. Cortlandt smiled. "Really, Hendricks, it is asking too much to expect to rouse me by this respect for something that is non-existent! You are not a successful student, but that does not necessarily mean that you will not be a successful business man. I shall find something for you to do, and life must be your teacher. You have your own way to make."

Hendricks' magnificent little air shriveled. "You expect to do nothing for me, sir?" he managed to inquire.

"Well,—I won't say nothing. . . . Ann is to have the bulk of my fortune, of course."

"Mother said so," the boy blurted out.

"In that case, my sister has shown her customary acumen. She will not be disappointed."

"Oh, yes, she will," young Hendricks exclaimed. "It is one thing to suspect,—and quite another to know!"

He made his way gloomily out of the room; to find himself actually cut off was catastrophic. He stood for a moment in the hall, trying to adjust himself, and to recall what it was that his mother had said to

him at breakfast, in regard to this calamity. She had appeared to have in mind some panacea that was not clear to her son.

Suddenly, as he stood frowning, Ann appeared on the stairs above him. She leaned confidingly down from the landing. "Uncle scold you?" she demanded, smiling demurely.

"No," Hendricks said shortly, as he glanced about for his hat.

Ann ran hurriedly down a few steps. "Are you going so soon?" she blurted out. Then she caught her lip with her teeth, as if she regretted her words.

He looked at her irresolutely, and once more the conviction that she was amazingly pretty popped into his head; he was always rediscovering this fact at inconvenient moments, and he resented it. He would have preferred to believe that the girl who had deprived him of his inheritance was as ugly as the stepsisters in Grimm's tales. "I don't know," he said, desperately, "what I shall do." He was very much puzzled, and he wished that his mother had the comfortable habit of plain speech.

Ann sidled down a step or two, sliding her hand along the stair rail. "You'll have to get your uniform," she suggested brightly, "and all that."

"I suppose so."

She looked at him with eyes that were starry with her new appreciation, and she came down the last remaining steps in a little rush. "Imagine it,—a uni-

form, and everything! You will sleep in a blanket, Hendricks. I just wish I had the chance to!"

Young Hendricks was conventionally shocked. "A girl!" he protested.

"It is not my fault that I'm not a boy. I am sure I wish I were!"

A sudden consciousness of his manhood rose in Hendricks. "I am glad you are not," he said stoutly, and caught her hand in his.

Ann stood arrested: in her perfect stillness there was the threat of one poised for flight. "You shouldn't!" she gasped, her glance holding his.

"Why not? You are the prettiest girl I know."

Her lips drooped, and in her eyes were all the sorrows of the world. "I am not, really," she pleaded. It seemed to Hendricks she grieved that he should be so deceived.

He slipped a blundering, unaccustomed arm about her waist, and an acrid little shiver ran through the girl; suddenly she turned to him, and buried her face in his shoulder. The boy held her for a moment, half frightened, half cautious; then he bent and pressed his lips to her hair. She felt his touch and started back; as she lifted her face, he caught it in both his hands, and kissed her cool lips.

This time she fought him off valiantly enough, and faced him furiously, with flashing eyes and uneven breath. He was frightened, as he met her accusing glance.

"It is all right," he said lamely. "I couldn't help it. . . . I am awfully gone on you, Ann," he added, feeling that the situation demanded something in the nature of a declaration.

"Really?" she queried. "Because if you are,—it's all right!"

"Then I am," he assured her.

"And—and we are engaged?" she demanded, her eyes very wide and innocent, as they searched his.

"Why—why—" He was wondering if this had been what his mother had meant.

"Uncle won't mind," she assured him. "He lets me do every single thing I want."

"And do you want to be engaged to me?"

"I don't know. . . . I guess so."

He wanted to talk with his mother. He was sure that she must approve of what he was doing. "Well, then," he said condescendingly, "we will be."

"It doesn't seem right,—so quick, like this," Ann protested. "I thought it took a long time to get engaged."

"Oh," reassured the boy, "it is always quick, when a woman likes a fellow." He swaggered, pardonably.

She looked at him with adoring eyes. "I am glad you are going to war," she said unexpectedly.

"We had better not tell any one until I get back."

"A secret engagement! . . . I should like to tell Fanny, though."

"Better not," he hinted darkly.

"Why?"

"Well, I don't want to seem conceited, but I do think she likes me quite a lot."

"Oh," exclaimed Ann, "that is romantic too!" And in her voice there was envy of Fanny, and her unrequited passion.

Hendricks Renneslyer walked home with his head in a whirl. He had left college, he was going to war, he was disinherited, and he had engaged himself to be married. He felt that he had put in a full morning's work, look at it as he would.

CHAPTER VIII

LETTERS

A WEEK after the "heroic Seventh" marched out of a flag-hung city, Ann received her first love-letter. She snatched it from Joseph's hand with a thrilling sensation of joy that comes only with the first. The friendly old servant chuckled sympathetically as he watched her hurry up-stairs with her treasure: he divined what others never suspected, and he went about his duties with his devoted head full of thoughts of wedding cake and bridal veils.

Ann, alone in the big house, locked the door of her room behind her, before she coaxingly lifted the heavy seal, with its flaunting Renneslyer crest; somehow it would not have done to break it. With a fluttering breath she drew out the enclosure, and read:

Washington, April 26th, 1861.

DEAREST ANN:

We have arrived in Washington and everything is all right now. We marched right up to the White House last night when we first came, and you can believe the president was glad to see us! He came out on the steps, and we saluted him, and he made us a little speech. He is the longest man you ever saw, —just like the funny drawings of him,—and very absent-minded, for he didn't seem to pay half as much attention to us as you would have thought he would, after all our trouble in getting here, and of course we

are not very comfortable, sleeping right on the floor of the capitol, without even beds. We are to be here for a whole month. You would think they would have taken more trouble about us.

We haven't had any chance to fight yet, and I suppose you think that is hard luck. It isn't a bit like what you saw when we marched away from LaFayette Place, with every one making a great fuss over us, and cheering so we couldn't hear the band. I saw you on the steps of the Astor Library, and wanted like anything to run over and say good-by again, only, of course, there was discipline, and people looking, too. Of course it was all right, your throwing me a kiss like that, but the man next me thought you meant it for him. You never saw anything like the girls all the way to Jersey City Ferry, and I think you ought to be more careful. They were half of them crying, like Fanny, and some of the men were, too, even though you didn't, and one awfully pretty one threw her glove at me, and called out "Good luck!" but I thought about you, and threw it back again. I do love you, Ann, but I wish people wouldn't look at you so in the street. I suppose it is your hair, and you can't help it, but even after I had my uniform, they paid more attention to you than they did to me. Of course a man doesn't want the girl he is engaged to to look conspicuous.

No one slept any on the boat going to Annapolis; we all sang songs like *Columbia, Gem of the Ocean,* and made jokes, and wondered if any more men had been killed in Baltimore. I suppose the *Boston* was a good enough boat, but it did seem awfully slow, when we didn't know but that when we got there we would find that the rebels had taken the city. You can believe we were glad to see the good old stars and

stripes! We were the first troops to occupy Annapolis, although a Massachusetts regiment came along soon, and we left on the train together. They are smart men, and brave, I am sure, but of course they are not gentlemen, and they can eat anything. Most of the food wasn't fit to swallow, and I am sure I don't know what we should have done if it had not been for the lunch boxes our men of the Seventh took with them.

I must tell you that just before I left I told my mother about our being engaged, and she was pleased, all right. I thought she might mind your being just a Byrne, and me being a Cortlandt, but she didn't. I think it is very broad-minded of her. Don't you? But all our family are broad-minded, of course. I don't know about telling Uncle Hendricks. It might be a good idea to get it over while I am away, so he can get used to the idea,—but we don't have to worry about that. Mother will do whatever is best.

Washington is a nice place. Some day I wish we might live there.

To-morrow is my twentieth birthday, and I never remember when I didn't have a cake before.

Your very own,
HENDRICKS.

Ann read the letter once, leaping and eager, and then again more broodingly, with lingering attention to the endearments, and to the ending,—"your very own Hendricks." What an odd thing to own, she thought involuntarily,—to own as she did the string of seed pearls her guardian had given her, or her blue bonnet *L'Imperatrice,* just out from Paris. And he had written "live in Washington," quite casually,

like that, when it was not conceivable that she should ever live anywhere but in her guardian's house, there in her straight ordered room, with its unlittered bureau, and its towering walnut bed. Being engaged, she felt, was enough. It was romantic, but it was sufficient.

Hesitatingly she opened her little writing desk, and prepared to answer Hendricks' masterpiece. Ordinarily she wrote with fluency: indeed, her drawback as a correspondent had hitherto been that her thoughts outran her pen, and were lost in her hurried, impulsive handwriting that was so difficult to read, but to-day her courage was gone, vanquished by the staggering consciousness that a love-letter was expected of her. She began to write haltingly.

DEAR HENDRICKS—

If I wrote "dearest" it wouldn't seem as if it were I that was writing. I shall save it,—but I am glad you didn't.

Your letter was exciting. It is more fun being a man than a girl.

She paused, wondering what compensation a man could have for never being called pretty, and added:

At least, sometimes I think so.

New York is exciting too, just now. The night after you left there was a big mass meeting in Union Square, with four stands for speakers, and flags and bands and things all about. Uncle spoke from one stand, and I sat beside him on the platform, and I am afraid you might have thought I was conspicuous,

but I can't help my horrid hair. There was an enormous crowd of people, and to sit and look down on all those solemn faces, turned up to the flaring lights, made prickly feelings run up and down your spine. And when they cheered, it was just all you could bear; somehow you were simply wild to do something, but you didn't have any idea what. The veterans from the War of 1812 were there, in their uniforms, with their swords buckled on, and some of them were lame, or had only one arm, and when they marched by I cried and cried, although I almost never do. Somehow the fact that we are at war makes empty sleeves horribly tragic!

She was writing easily now, and enjoying herself.

Uncle spoke beautifully, all about what we owe to our country, and they raised quite a large sum of money, and ever so many men volunteered. Aren't you glad you were in the very first lot? I am.

I had an experience coming home,—not much of a one. Somehow or other I was so excited that I ran on ahead of uncle, when the meeting was breaking up, and lost him in the crowd, and there I was, with the night awfully black away from the lights on the stands, and,—oh, millions of people swarmed about, singing and shouting,—yes, and swearing, too, some of them. For a minute I was scared, and then I thought about you, and I knew you would be funny and cross if you could see me, and that helped, and then a rough-looking man took hold of my arm, and said, "Ain't you too pretty to be out alone, miss?" I tried to wrench myself free, and couldn't, so I just turned and looked at him, and after a minute he stopped laughing, and then he had the very kindest face you ever saw, only so unhappy. And when he

saw that I was really frightened, he let go my arm, and I said, "I've lost my uncle. Would it be very much out of your way to take me to Washington Square? I have never been out alone at night, before." And he said no, he wasn't very busy just then, and he was the fastest walker you ever saw; in a minute we were clear of the crowd, and just streaking for home. He seemed very queer and jerky, almost as if he were embarrassed, so I asked him all about himself, and he said his wife was dead, and that he hadn't any family,—and I said he must be lonely, and he said he was just a bad lot. Then I said, "Isn't that splendid? You can volunteer without hurting any one, can't you?" And he laughed a little, but not as if he thought anything was funny, and just before we came to the house he said,—"Well, I'm going," and I said "Where?" and he said,—"To fight the damned Johnnies! I reckon you are right,—goin' to war is better than goin' to hell!" It was the first time any one had ever said "Damn," to me,—right out like that,—and do you know, I liked it! And he wouldn't come in and let uncle thank him, and he never said anything else at all, and I am afraid he will be shot, and it will be all my fault.

They have started a Union Defense Committee that meets every day in the new Fifth Avenue Hotel, and uncle is never at home any more. He spends all his time working for the war, and I am sure he is sorry he is not young enough to fight,—but I am glad, for uncle is different, somehow.

Your mother came to see me, and kissed me, and told me a great many things about you. She made me feel that I am indeed a fortunate girl. I think I ought to tell you that I do feel that. I haven't told uncle, because somehow I am sure it will make him feel

sad,—but why should it? Dear me,—I couldn't wait to grow up, and now I almost wish I hadn't.

Your father is sweet to me. I am sure he will like me. Last night he took me to Niblo's Gardens to see a wonderful man named Rarey train wild horses. Your father said I should learn his method, so that I might try it on you! But truly he was marvelous, and it is no wonder that all the kings in Europe went to see him,—and that good young Prince of Wales.

The Battery Park is all full of soldiers' tents, and three days ago one hundred ladies met in the New York Hospital for Women, to organize a new sort of committee, to be called the "Sanitary Commission." They intend to teach women how to nurse the wounded men, if the war goes on, and to prepare hospital supplies, and all that. The men are making fun of it, because they think it is too big an idea for just women to carry out, but I think women are a whole lot smarter than men think they are! Anyway, Ann Byrne has been put to work in New York, scraping lint!

Joseph is knocking at the door to tell me that uncle wants me.

ANN.

Mr. Cortlandt was standing at the window of his library, looking out into the faintly misted green of Washington Square. His upright figure drooped; he looked old and discouraged.

"What is it?" Ann cried from the threshold. "Has there been a defeat?"

Her guardian turned, a steady melancholy in his deep eyes. "No," he said, "it is not that. . . . Is this true,—what my sister tells me?"

"What?"

"That you are engaged,—and to young Hendricks?"

"Yes, uncle." She crossed the room to him with lagging feet. "I—I hated to tell you. . . . He wants me to be engaged to him."

"Engaged? So soon! And young Hendricks! Why?"

"Well,—he thinks I am—rather nice."

"Good lord, of course you are rather nice! Is that all?"

Ann slid her hand into his. "No," she confessed confusedly. "If you won't laugh, I'll tell you." She put her fresh lips very near his cheek, and murmured, "He thinks I am—pretty! He really does."

Mr. Cortlandt took her by her slender shoulders, and looked into her shamed eyes. "It is my fault," he said heavily.

"What is your fault?"

"You are in love with him for that! Pretty? . . . I have brought you up wrong, Ann. Instead of trying to keep you unspoiled, I should have told you each morning that you are a beautiful creature! I should have protected you in that way."

"Do you mean it, uncle?—Am I really—like that?"

"My dear, you really are!"

She smiled at him radiantly. "Now imagine!" she said quaintly. "And I have been so afraid that Hendricks would wake up!"

"Do you love him?"

"I think so, uncle. . . . He says I do."

"It may be years before he can afford to marry. He must make his own way."

"There's no hurry," Ann said hastily, and then added sweetly: "Aren't you a little glad to have me marry into your family?"

Mr. Cortlandt looked deep into her lifted eyes, "My dear child," he said unbelievably, "my family isn't good enough for you." And he kissed her smooth cheek, and sighed.

CHAPTER IX

OUT AND IN

THE Seventh Regiment volunteered for one month only; in five weeks it was back again in New York. Ann was enormously glad to see Hendricks, but she had been looking forward so ecstatically to his return that when he appeared she was possibly a trifle disappointed. In her thoughts she had endowed him with extraneous charm, and looking at him she was conscious of a sudden sinking of her spirit. However, Hendricks put a uniformed arm about her waist and kissed her rather shyly, and with the humility of his caress her sense of unworthiness came flooding back. Who was she, she marveled, to be chosen by the family hero out of a world of women? She made him tell her all about his brief campaign. They spent hours in the high dim library talking of it, and Ann glowed with martial excitement. She always thought of Hendricks as a soldier, ready, at the call, to sacrifice his life for his country, and she felt that it was only right for him to have everything he might want, including her, as that was his strange wish. She was extraordinarily supple and unselfish with him in these days, but, while she understood that the Seventh Regiment was to be demobilized immediately, she would not frankly face the fact that once her lover was mustered out, he would be merely a civilian again. When

he came in one day, his uniform exchanged for a smartly checked coat and waistcoat and loose snuff-colored trousers, she looked at him aghast, and turned in his arms so that his lips pressed her hair instead of her cheek.

"How queer you look," she said querulously.

"It is good to get out of that uncomfortable uniform, I can tell you," Hendricks returned indignantly.

"Oh, uncomfortable!"

"You've gone crazy about uniforms in this war, that's what's the matter with you, Ann! Now you listen to me. I have something to tell you."

She looked up eagerly; already the members of the Seventh were volunteering into other regiments, and she thought Hendricks was about to announce that he had done the same thing.

"You have reenlisted already!" She clasped both her hands about his arm and lifted an adoring face.

"Don't be silly! The president will have eighty-five thousand men under the new call; let them take their turn at it, I have done my share."

"But those men are enlisting for three years, Hendricks."

"Yes,—or the duration of the war, Ann. You'll see,—it will be all over in six months." The girl's hands dropped, while bleak indifference swept into her face. Hendricks' tone was defensive as he added, "I've got a position in a bank,—third assistant receiving teller,—and I am going to work to-morrow morning. They will pay me sixty dollars a month."

"Will they?" Her tone was as unconcerned as a mere stranger's.

"Well, you might take an interest, Ann!" His voice was indignant, but he put a timid boyish hand on her sleeve. "That is seven hundred and twenty dollars a year. When I'm making a thousand I think we might be married."

Ann drew her arm away precipitately. "Oh, married!" she said, as startled as though the idea were entirely new to her.

"Plenty of people live on that."

"I suppose so. . . . I don't know much about it, Hendricks, but things do seem expensive."

"It is the war," the boy said importantly. "When that is over they'll come down again."

Ann swept out the wide skirt of checked silk which she was wearing. "Uncle paid six dollars a yard for this material," she said, "and my new black velvet jacket cost one hundred twenty dollars. Shocking, isn't it?"

"Well, I should think you could give up silk and velvet, Ann, to marry me."

"Yes, of course I could. . . . But I can't think about it with the war still going on! Really, Hendricks, I can't take an interest in marrying anybody while we are fighting."

And this was a fairly accurate description of her state of mind. Her imagination was entirely caught by the great drama and she had little interest in self-centered love-making.

Late in May the Union Army moved on Alexandria, where the Rebel flag flew in plain sight of all Washington, and in the successful occupation, Colonel Ellsworth, the leader of the New York Fire Zouaves, was killed. His death made a great sensation in New York, where he had been a popular figure, and as a result, there was a great rush for enlistment. As the summer drew on, and the gravity of the struggle became evident, the crowd of young men about the offices in Lafayette Hall daily became more dense; the ranks of recruiting regiments were rapidly filled. Each regiment had its separate bivouac; before long the outskirts of the city were dotted with encampments. Every fair afternoon Mr. Cortlandt came home early in order to ride on a tour of inspection of one camp or another, and Ann, somewhat to Hendricks' disquiet, always accompanied him. On the boy's first free day he went with them, and the three of them rode rather silently, for three is a poorer number on horseback than it is anywhere else, to an encampment on Harlem Heights, where tents of various types were scattered prodigally about, and men in a naive conception of zouave dress loafed in front of them.

Ann looked well on horseback. Her waist, in her long pointed basque, was extraordinarily slim, and her full skirts flowed gracefully, undulating with every movement of the horse. She wore a small black hat with a feather that curled down over her chignon, and she carried her head alertly, looking about her with

smiling eyes. Her mare was high-spirited, and camps were filled with things she distrusted,—eddying bits of paper and sudden crashes of noise. Ann, her knee curved tight to the pommel, laughed at her quick shies, and tickled her side with the edge of her heel, so that she danced protestingly, but the soldiers looked at her in anxious admiration; they straightened up as she passed, pulled down their belts, and set their caps at a more rakish angle.

"Ann," Hendricks protested, "I think you are awfully conspicuous."

The girl flashed a quick grin at him. "Yes,—isn't it fun?" she said. And Mr. Cortlandt told him shortly not to be absurd.

As soon as the regiments were ready, they were sent off to Virginia, where the Federal Army was advancing slowly, and engaging in unimportant clashes with the enemy. The North was eager for victories, and hailed the taking of Fairfax Court-House as an important event. Great crowds hung about before the newspaper bulletin-boards, following the movements of the New York troops engaged in the advance; enthusiasm was in the air, and the women at the Sanitary Commission redoubled their efforts. Ann scraped so much lint in a day that she was, herself, amazed.

In July, in an engagement at Manassas Junction, there came the first death in the war of any one Ann had known. Young Philip Vanderdyken, with whom she had danced at her début, was shot and buried on the field. This brought the tragic thing close; she was

greatly shocked, and for a time she seemed almost to have transferred to him her feeling for her lover. Hendricks and his bookkeeping seemed incredibly remote.

The boy dropped into the Washington Square house one hot afternoon when his work was over and found only his cousin Fanny. Mr. Cortlandt's darkened library was gratifyingly refreshing, and as he sank into the most comfortable chair, he allowed himself the luxury of complaint.

"Where is Ann?" he demanded accusingly.

Fanny flushed sensitively as she answered that she did not know, and, murmuring something about the heat, she hurried off to make him some iced lemonade. He drank it with a delightful sense of being ministered to, which, curiously enough, increased his resentment toward Ann.

"She knew I was coming to-day," he said, darkly irascible.

Now and then he would get up from his seat, stalk over to the window, and open the shutter so that he might look out. Every time he did so, the sun leaped fiercely in, shattering the illusion of coolness, and when he had again thrown himself into his chair, Fanny would, after an uneasy interval, steal across the room and close the shutter gently so that Hendricks should not notice it. She cast an apprehensive glance at him, each time.

"I can't think where she can be," she murmured sympathetically, again and again.

The outer door opened, and there was a murmur of a girl's clear voice in greeting. Old Joseph's footsteps receded, but still the culprit did not appear; there was something reluctant in her delay. It was a good minute before her slim figure and wide crinoline was brilliantly outlined against the gloom of the doorway. She was apparently unaware of the disapproval she faced, for she smiled impersonally at the two cousins. "Hello," she said. Nodding her head at Hendricks, she crossed over to the piano, and seated herself before it. "I heard a new song to-day." She was pulling the gloves off her warm white hands, with a flirt of the crisp ruffles at her wrists.

"What is it?" Hendricks glanced uneasily at Fanny for verification of his impression of Ann's indifference.

Ann struck a martial chord, and then began to play, brilliantly, the simple tune of *Yankee Doodle.* She ran through it once, before she took up the words.

> "Yankee Doodle is the song
> Americans delight in.
> Good to whistle, dance or sing
> And just the thing for fightin'!"

She broke off, and left the piano abruptly. "Want to whistle, Hendricks?" she inquired innocently, as she went to investigate the lemonade pitcher.

"Where have you been? It is six o'clock."

"The Twenty-Fourth Infantry marched away to-day," Ann observed impersonally. There was nothing to show that this fact had constituted the proverbial last straw on the load of her endurance.

"I know," Fanny said placidly, "we had hard work to get their havelocks finished in time. Even Ann worked on them," she added brightly, in an effort to lighten Hendricks' gloom.

"I am glad to hear that," Hendricks said, in heavy approbation.

"You don't know what else I did," Ann said defiantly. She was unreasonably irritated at the sight of Hendricks' lounging in his uncle's most comfortable chair, lemonade in hand.

Fanny interposed nervously, miserable in the face of a situation that was becoming strained. "You worked all the morning."

"Oh, yes,—I worked. . . . I can work much faster than you, Fanny, when I try. . . . I finished ever so many havelocks, and,—I put a note in the last one."

Hendricks bounced from his chair, his face crimson with indignation. "You did what?" he stormed.

Ann tilted the empty lemonade pitcher regretfully. "Pigs," she said reproachfully.

"Oh, Ann!" Fanny murmured, deeply shocked. At the fashionable gatherings where she sewed for the soldiers it was whispered that notes were things indulged in by "vulgar girls,—girls from the country." She would have suffered torments before she would have so betrayed her caste.

"What made you do a thing like that? What did you say?" the young man demanded fiercely.

"Oh, I said I hoped my havelock would keep him

safe from harm. . . . And that I hoped he would kill ever so many Rebels."

"Did you sign your name?" Fanny inquired, awe-struck.

"I just wrote Ann."

"Your first name,—to a stranger?"

"He didn't seem like a stranger. . . . When I saw them marching away I would have given anything to know which one had it."

"When you saw them marching away," repeated Hendricks in a voice of doom. "Did you go over to Broadway to see them?"

"I did."

"With uncle?"

"No."

"Alone in all that crowd?"

The girl's impatience flared out. "Oh, what difference does it make? . . . They marched down the street singing *John Brown's Body* . . . and all the flags were hanging out . . . and every one was shouting! . . . I saw a woman crying because her husband had gone. . . . And I shouted, too, and waved my handkerchief; I wouldn't have cried,—not even if uncle had gone. . . . All around me men were shouting 'On to Richmond!'" She drew a passionate breath, and pressed her hands tightly against her breast. "And there you were, Hendricks, making money. Money!" She threw her hands out in a gesture of desperation. "You never seem to think of the war at all,—and I can't get away

from it for a minute! . . . You know, Fanny, every morning, on our way to the Sanitary Commission we go through all that crowd at the recruiting office,—young men wild to go,—and you have only to pass the armory any time all day long, to see soldiers drilling there. . . . I can't think of anything else; it seems all the time as if marches were beating in my head!"

"Ann, I don't think the neighborhood of the armory these days is any place for a young lady," Hendricks said stiffly. "And if you will take five minutes longer to get to the Sanitary Commission rooms you can go the other way and avoid all that rabble at the recruiting office."

"That is what I tell her,—" Fanny murmured feebly, but Ann swept on.

"You think all those things are important,—you two! What difference does it make what I do,—when there is a battle going on—now? At noon I stopped before the bulletin-board at *The Tribune* office, and that is what it said,—now! This very minute! At Bull Run. Men dying! And we sit here!"

Hendricks smiled at her with affectionate tolerance. "There are at least sixty thousand men in Washington," he said soothingly. "General Scott can handle it, all right. We are sure to win."

He was cut short by the clatter of horses' feet and the confusion of a sudden stop before the house. Ann leaped to the window to look.

"It's uncle!" she cried. "Something must have happened!" She ran out to meet him, leaving Fanny white-faced and tremulous. It was only a moment before she returned, with her arm through Mr. Cortlandt's, half supporting him.

"What is it?" gasped Fanny, frightened.

"Defeat!" Ann flung at Hendricks, and she faced him with blazing eyes.

"A rout," her guardian supplemented, "a shameful rout! . . . Five hundred men lost!"

"Oh!" cried Fanny, unheeded tears running over her cheeks, "the Fire Zouaves!" The casualty in New York's picturesque heroes brought the thing terribly close.

"Scott should never have yielded to the demand for a decisive engagement. . . . He hadn't enough discipline."

"Or enough reserves, uncle!" Ann turned a scornful glance on Hendricks.

"I suppose you want me to reenlist?" he demanded truculently.

"Ann, how can you?" Fanny protested, futilely, sheer terror in her unnoticed face, while Mr. Cortlandt laid a restraining hand on Ann's arm.

"I want to go, all right," the boy said. "You know that, don't you, Uncle Hendricks? Do you think I should?"

Mr. Cortlandt was silent for a moment; he entirely disregarded the impatient little pushes Ann gave him from time to time. "Hendricks," he said, at length,

"I hate to have you go—God knows, to-night we know what may happen,—but the country needs the young men."

Suddenly Ann melted. She clung to Hendricks as she had never done, and lifted an ardent face to his. "Oh, Hendricks,—dear, dear Hendricks!" She could feel his resolution in the big breath he drew.

The old man watched them sadly. "When you come home, you will be in a position to marry, Hendricks. . . . I will do better by you than the bank."

"When you come home, Hendricks,—when the Rebels are all beaten,—I'll marry you if you haven't a cent!"

"Well," he said gloomily, although his arm tightened about Ann, "that settles it."

"Oh," she cried, undeterred by the presence of her guardian and Fanny, "I love you, Hendricks! I do love you, after all!"

CHAPTER X

SERIOUS BUSINESS

HAVING made up his mind, Hendricks Renneslyer lost no time in severing his connection with the bank, and the next day, while Ann was only beginning to taste the joy of having bent him to her will, he announced that he had joined the Fifty-Fifth New York Volunteers. A week later he was under canvas on Staten Island, endeavoring to absorb sufficient information in regard to drills and maneuvers to enable him to perform his duties as second lieutenant with some likelihood of success.

It was a polyglot assortment of men he enrolled himself among. The Fifty-Fifth was originally a French Militia Regiment, known as the "Guarde Lafayette," with a peace footing of about three hundred, whose duty it had been to parade, in the picturesque red of the Zouave Corps, in Fourth of July celebrations, and at funerals. When the regiment volunteered for the war the ranks were filled, in a hit or miss fashion, with rough young Irishmen from the lower wards, Germans from their adopted firesides, and Americans who had not gone out in the first rush of enlisting. Three months after the war began, it was no longer an easy task to complete a regiment; already the crowd around Lafayette Hall, where the recruiting was carried on, was scattered, but the hour

of the mercenary was not yet come, and the Fifty-Fifth was filled by unbought volunteers. It took four weeks to secure them, but it was done.

The officers were largely exiles from France, whose military experience was far greater than that of the average American officer. Hendricks was given a commission as a matter of course, owing to his brief connection with the illustrious Seventh, whose members were leading half the companies that left New York. He was greatly bewildered by his new duties, for his month's service had not, after all, taught him much, but he managed to pick up some useful information from a soldier in his company who had served in Africa and the Crimea, and when the Fifty-Fifth was ready to march, he had a fair parade ground idea of his duties.

Ann exulted in his importance. She was always begging her guardian to take her across the bay to see him drill with his men, and she thought about him constantly. When the sun shone hot she wondered if he were drilling on the open parade ground, and when it rained in the night she could not sleep, because she was certain his tent must leak. This, she decided, with a vivid sense of relief, was love. It was, indeed, as near it as she had come.

Hendricks' second military departure was strangely different from his first. It was only four months since the Seventh Regiment had marched away, in a jubilee of adulation, but in that time war had become an ominous thing. When the Fifty-Fifth broke camp,

and started for the front, Ann had no exultant thrill. As she stood beside her guardian, overlooking the double line of marching men, their *opera bouffe* uniforms bright in the hot August sunlight, she found to her amazement that her breath caught in her throat in something very like a sob. She stole a guilty glance at Mr. Cortlandt, and saw that his eyes, too, were filled with tears. An officer rode by with the flag of the regiment, and a roar of hurrahs drowned out the insistent drums.

Ann seized Mr. Cortlandt's arm. "Uncle," she gasped, "I don't want them to go!" She had a sudden clear vision of young Philip Vanderdyken, lying shot through the head on the field of battle. She was all at once fearful that she might never see Hendricks again.

At the train she puzzled him by her inarticulate depression. She clung to him desperately, so that he was embarrassed at such public demonstration, and she did not smile nor wave her hand as the train drew away; she only looked at him, profoundly.

Back in Washington Square Mrs. William Cortlandt was awaiting them.

"Hendricks," she said at once, "I have come for some money."

"Sanitary Commission again?" Mr. Cortlandt asked, smiling. Ann knew that he liked his sister-in-law better than he ever had before, now that she was devoting herself to war work, and indeed, the girl did too.

"No,—this time it is for an Army Hospital."

Ann drew nearer, fascinated. There was talk of opening a hospital for soldiers in New York, and she found the prospect infinitely exciting.

"Has it been decided to equip one?" Mr. Cortlandt asked.

"Yes. We expect to take care of the boys from near-by camps,—there are many ill with fever, you know,—and, of course, there is even a possibility of our getting some of the wounded, if the war goes on through the winter."

"Oh!" cried Ann rapturously. "How wonderful!" No one paid any attention to her, however.

"Hendricks,—I don't know what you will think. . . . When we get the hospital ready,—I have made up my mind to nurse in it." Mrs. William looked as frightened as a daring little girl.

Ann's eyes widened. To nurse! To bathe brows, and to moisten fevered lips; to read poetry, and to place flowers by sick beds! That was life. She, too, would be a nurse!

"It is a new work for gentlewomen," her guardian said doubtfully.

"Yes,—but so are hardships of campaigning new work for gentlemen!"

It amazed Ann to hear Fanny's conservative mother championing something her guardian thought unconventional, and she flung herself into the talk, eager to help her. "It's the next best thing to fighting, to

be a nurse, uncle!" she declared. "And when the hospital is opened I shall work there, too."

Mrs. William turned on her, ingratitude in every line of her plump figure. "Indeed you shan't, miss!" she cried. "What an idea! A young girl!"

"Well, young men are fighting!" The girl appealed to her guardian. "Uncle,—I may,—mayn't I?"

He shook his head, smiling. She could see that he did not take her request seriously. "Hendricks wouldn't like it, I am sure," he chaffed, and she felt herself flushing up, sharply.

"La! I should think he wouldn't!" exclaimed Mrs. William, and swept on with her plans for transforming a dwelling house into a hospital. The subject of Ann's participation appeared to be disposed of, but the girl knew better. As she sat silently by, absently taking in the conversation, she was quite determined as to one thing; when the hospital was opened she would work in it, no matter what opposition she overcame. She watched Mr. Cortlandt draw a generous check, with exultation; it brought her opportunity so much the nearer.

Letters came through promptly from Hendricks. He wrote that Washington was greatly changed in the two months he had been in New York. "We spent our first night in a big barracks just across from the station, which has been built since I was here. It was as bare as an empty barn, and we could smell the new pine wood. We slept right on the bare floor,

and I never knew before I had so many hips and elbows. . . . In the morning we were awakened early by,—what do you think? Rebel guns! The Frenchmen who had seen service abroad jumped up crying *'Mon Dieu! C'est le feu!'* and you could hear our fellows taking it up. 'It's cannon.' But they weren't firing at us, so we had breakfast."

Apparently the Fifty-Fifth, trained by experienced men, had made a good impression in Washington, for the crowd had cheered as it marched up Pennsylvania Avenue, and marveled at the spectacle of new troops already familiar with the rudiments of drilling. Hendricks' first letters concerned themselves mainly with complaints of the confusion existing in the Commissary and Quartermaster Departments; the men of the Fifty-Fifth were left for twenty-four hours in their new encampments without rations, tents, or wood for fires, and their lieutenant was justifiably indignant. "It was warm weather and no rain, so it didn't hurt the men to sleep out, and those of us who had brought food shared it, and we got along all right, but things are in bad shape down here. . . . Our officers are very strict with us and we drill six hours a day, rain or shine, but the other regiments are not half so hard worked, and a good many of the officers are no good. The one camping next to ours is commanded by a politician from Pittsburgh, a big fat man and very jolly, who drills under an umbrella when it rains, and there is a Wisconsin regiment here whose colonel conducts platoon drill with his book in his hand because

he doesn't know the commands. A lot of men have been made officers because they gave money for bounties to recruit their companies; they really know less about their work than some of our privates do, and of course all this is very bad for discipline. Men don't like it; we are too near the enemy; often we drill to the sound of their artillery.

"A funny thing happened last night. It was our major's turn to command the Grand Guard of the Brigade, and he sent me, in the middle of the night, to make the rounds of the camps. My men and I went into twelve of them without being stopped, or even challenged. We walked around freely everywhere, and in one regiment we found seven sentinels asleep, rolled up in their blankets. At last we went right into the tent belonging to the colonel of an Indiana regiment. It wasn't guarded or anything, and we carried off the flag of the regiment, which was sent the next day to General Peck, to be returned with a reprimand. Our officers call men like that 'pasteboard colonels.'

"We are camped in the woods on the bank of a rapid little stream named, very appropriately, Rock Creek; it is a very pretty place. There are steep ravines all about us, and little waterfalls in the river. From the field where we drill we can see miles of farmland, all dotted, near at hand, with the white tents of the army."

Ann read this letter aloud to her guardian and he was greatly pleased with it.

"It is making a man of Hendricks," he said exultantly. "Is there anything more?"

"Yes," the girl answered, "there is a post-script. He says, 'Make Uncle Hendricks bring you over to Washington to see us.'"

"Well, my dear, perhaps I shall, one of these days." It seemed to Ann that she could not possibly wait.

CHAPTER XI

HOSPITALS

THE first Army Hospital in New York was no sooner opened than the need for it was evident; the camps were fever ridden, and a score of men was sent in on the opening day. Indeed, the reputation it established was of so high a character that doctors with the army spoke enviously of it, and in spite of its remoteness from the front, the fact that it was actually ready, with a staff of nurses and doctors waiting for patients, made the War Department decide to use it. The men came, exhausted from their wounds and the journey, and Mrs. William Cortlandt, who proved to be an excellent nurse, brought home tearful tales of heroic and suffering youth to which Ann listened with shining eyes. Romance hovered over the commonplace building that housed the wounded, and it was not long before the girl suggested that she might be allowed to serve as Mrs. William's assistant. This seemed to her to be a position sufficiently chaperoned to be acceptable, but Mrs. Renneslyer told her plainly that she considered it highly improper for Hendricks' future wife to consider doing any such thing, and his father pinched her cheek, saying facetiously that the sight of her would never reduce a sick man's fever. Even Mr. Cortlandt irrelevantly conversed with her on the im-

portance of conservative behavior, and Mrs. William said, flatly, that she wouldn't undertake the responsibility of having a young girl about.

She did not attempt to overcome this concerted opposition, but she said rebelliously to Fanny, "I wish I was old. I wish I was twenty-five! Then I could do anything I liked. And I will anyway,—you'll see! Some day I'll get my chance."

About a fortnight after Hendricks' departure, her opportunity came. She was working at the Sanitary Commission, when a call came from the hospital for more bedding.

"Let me take it down," she volunteered eagerly. "I can have the carriage here in ten minutes."

They piled the seats high, but at the hospital it was all quickly unpacked, and Ann had no excuse to linger, fascinated, in the yawning doorway. In no time at all she was on her way back, lost in gloomy disappointment, when suddenly, while crossing a street, the horses shied violently to one side. Ann roused herself bewilderedly, and looked hurriedly about her. A man was standing in the middle of the road close beside her; he swayed toward her as she passed, so that for an unpleasant instant she feared that he would be caught by the carriage. She thought that he must be drunk, and she looked back curiously. He lay, a crumpled blue heap, in the roadway. He was a soldier! In a moment she was kneeling beside him, turning his pallid face toward her, with hands that trembled.

"Oh, what is it?" she cried. "Did we run you

down?" Her colored driver made frantic gestures and inarticulate sounds to indicate that they had not, but she paid no attention to him.

The soldier looked gravely at her. He did not seem to notice that he lay unconventionally in a dusty roadway, or that a beautiful young woman knelt, agonized, beside him. "No, ma'am," he said gravely. "It's just that I am a little weak. . . . At the ferry there were so many of us hospital cases,—they thought I might walk."

"Oh!" Ann cried, rapture in her voice. "Are you wounded?"

"No, ma'am. I'm just sick. . . . Light case of typhoid, doctor said."

"I see." At that period of the war typhoid had not yet proved itself to a be a greater foe to the soldier even than shot or steel, and Ann's tone was relieved. "You can't go on lying here, you know. Where were you going? I'll drive you there." She signaled to her coachman to come to help him get up.

He closed his eyes wearily. "Hospital," he said weakly.

"Oh," Ann pleaded, "don't faint! Please don't faint!"

"I won't," the soldier promised, and kept his word, even when the coachman hauled him up into the open carriage, while Ann stood at the horses' heads to keep them perfectly quiet. He was, however, alarmingly white as he lay back against the cushions. Ann longed

to ask him a hundred questions, but when they started he lurched helplessly against her, and instead she put a hesitating arm about him. He slumped down on her shoulder, and they drove in this fashion back to the hospital, under the thick green arch of the summer trees. Ann felt amazingly self-conscious; she knew that it was unworthy of her, but she couldn't help it, and in spite of it she enjoyed herself. This was war as she had dreamed it; a helpless soldier wounded,—or, if not actually wounded, at least ill,—and dependent upon her. . . . It was all too soon when the hospital was reached, and her patient roused himself.

"I'll see if they have a stretcher, and can carry you in," Ann volunteered.

"No. . . . I'll walk. . . . I feel better after my ride." And he was better; he managed to descend, with only Ann's eager help, but he clung gratefully to the gate-post when he reached it. He looked wistfully up the walk that led to the door. "I'll never make it," he said childishly. "But don't leave me, will you?"

Ann's eyes filled with unexpected tears. "Never," she promised. She held him up manfully. She wished that he were a little boy, so that she might gather him up in her arms, tuck his head comfortably down on her shoulder and carry him, but instead she half led, half dragged him up the walk. She was amazed at his weight and horribly afraid she couldn't manage to get him safely inside the hospital. The flight of steps before the door seemed to her impossible.

An orderly looked out of the open doorway. "John!" he bawled, as he sprang forward. He brushed Ann aside as though she were the merest incident in the rescue of her sick soldier. He took one of the man's hands, and pulled his arm around his neck, jerking him away from her, so that the blue-clad body sagged against him heavily, and the soldier moaned a little. Ann sprang to his other side, but almost immediately John appeared. He was a nurse,—Ann could tell that, because his apron was bloody from the operating-room, —but his technique was the same as the orderly's, for he, too, ignored Ann. He put a capable arm around her soldier, and between them the two men hustled him up the steps, and through the open doorway. Ann followed forlornly; she felt very superfluous. In the hall she paused, but not one of the three looked back, or apparently thought of her again.

"Well," she murmured. "Well!" She was possessed by a feeling of extraordinary flatness, and she was hurt, too, which she knew was unreasonable of her. The hall was completely empty, but she feared that Mrs. William might, at any moment, come bustling into it and banish her. There were benches against the wall, and she dropped down on one, disconsolately. "Men," she said to herself, "how horrid they are!" Her eyes filled again, and she luxuriated in her tears.

"In trouble?" A great, shaggy gray man, comfortably shabby and amazingly kind-looking, enveloped her in an expansive personality.

Ann looked up at him and nodded drearily.

The stranger sat down beside her, quite as if he had known her all his life. "Tell me about it, sister," he said buoyantly. His red face beamed down upon her, above a wild bush of gray beard.

"I want to be a nurse," she replied, unexpectedly to herself, and as she voiced the grievance, she knew that what she resented was not the casual manner of the two attendants; it was being shut out from their paradise.

"And why not?" demanded her new friend, oratorically. "Nothing is more noble! These young men! . . . Bands with cymbals and bugles and drums, making everything ring! And sabers rattling on thousands of men's sides; they wear pistols and their heels are spurred,—handsome American young men, all eager to fight! You've seen them?"

Ann nodded again, round eyed, and he swept on.

"They pass through Washington,—I have seen them there. All good riders, full of the devil, nobody shaved, everybody sunburnt, masculine and healthy! Noble-looking fellows proud on good horses! Going off for deadly rendezvous with other young men, just as fine-looking. And then? I've been in the hospitals. The most pitiful sight is when they are first brought in,—pale as ashes, all dirty and torn,—rugged young men, all weak and bloody, uniforms dirty, and all bloody. All wounds bad,—some frightful,—full of maggots and festering. I have to hustle around to keep from bursting out crying."

"But what do you do? What can I do?"

"Can you nurse?"

"I never have."

"No,—you are too young. The men like middle-aged nurses and mothers of families."

"But if I can't nurse, is there anything else?"

"I should say so," he fairly shouted. "I believe the reason I am able to do good among the wounded boys is that I am so strong and well,—and so are you, and beautiful, too. Men come in faint and wounded; they need nourishing things to eat. I am going now to buy oyster soup for those that came from the Philadelphia ferry. It will give them an addition to their dinner. They like home-made biscuits, too, and sweet cookies and jelly; you could go through the hospital every day doing good deeds. Often they have no money; you could give them small sums to buy a glass of milk when it is peddled through the wards. They all want to write home; you can give them letter paper, and write for them if necessary. You can read to them, and talk cheering talk to them; save lives by keeping men from giving up! You can do errands for them." Encouraged by Ann's fascinated stare, he drew a little note-book from his pocket. "I keep a list here of things they want, and buy them for them. And so it goes. Want to help?"

"Oh, yes," Ann gasped.

"Come along then,—I'll get you started. Live in New York?"

"Yes. Do you?"

"No, I live in Brooklyn, but I'm going back to

Washington. I have a call to serve in the hospitals there. What is your name?"

"Ann Byrne."

"Well, Annie, good luck! My name is Whitman,—Walt,—ever hear of me?"

"No." Her ignorance spoke eloquently of the perfection of her upbringing.

He chuckled. "No, but you will. All these United States will. I am a poet," he explained grandiloquently.

"I know some poets," the girl ventured. "Mr. William Cullent Bryant, Mr. James Russell Lowell, and Mr. Ralph Waldo Emerson."

Walt Whitman laughed delightedly. "There is a man," he cried. "And I can call him friend! But come, we must hurry, or no oysters for my boys!" He hustled Ann unceremoniously through the nearest doorway, and the girl paused, aghast. It was an old drawing-room in which she found herself, good sized and frivolously ornamented, with the sun pouring in the high uncurtained windows. The glare of light revealed mercilessly all the horror of a war hospital ward. Rows of cots ran up and down the room; they were crowded close, for a new lot of wounded had just been brought in. There was incredible confusion everywhere. Doctors and men nurses rushed about, patients who were able to walk wandered forlornly here and there, and attendents were passing a luncheon of boiled rice and molasses. The air was very bad, for already gangrene was making hospital

wards places of torment. The men lay sprawling on the beds, more often than not still in their dirty uniforms, inexpressibly forlorn and unkept. Ann could scarcely bear to look at them; she had not imagined that soldiers could be pathetic, but all the triumphant quality was gone from these men. She wanted to cry, looking at them; she was afraid that she would, and set her jaw hard, to control its trembling.

"This is what you must do," Walt Whitman whispered. He gave her a little pad of paper and a pencil. "Follow me."

He approached the nearest cot, and bent over a man who lay there: he radiated vitality and helpfulness. "Can I do anything for you?" he asked. "Is there anything you want?"

"I want my dinner," the patient answered ungraciously. "I can't relish molasses." He had a bandage tied about his head, and over one eye.

"I thought you might like to write to your folks."

"Write home? To Massachusetts? I'd like that first rate, but there's no paper, and anyway, I can't see. The damned Rebs got my eye."

Ann moved uncertainly forward. "Oh, please let me write for you," she gasped; and she wrote, at his dictation, how her patient had been hurt in street fighting in Baltimore, and how he would like to be at home again. Her nerves steadied somewhat under this occupation, and when she had finished, her amazing new friend had disappeared. However, the man in the next cot was clamoring for water, so she fetched him a glass

from the pitcher, and then settled down again to write another letter, this time for a lad whose arm was horribly smashed; the fresh blood on his bandages turned her momentarily sick. Following Mr. Whitman's example, she made a little list of the things the men wanted, and promised to bring them on the morrow.

There seemed no end to the things she could do, and when Fanny's mother found her she was so deeply immersed in her new service that she simply paid no attention to her horrified protests. After an interval Mr. Cortlandt arrived, ominously stern-looking, but when he found Ann sitting by the bedside of a white youth whose operation loomed close ahead of him, reading aloud to him from the last installment of *The Adventures of Philip*, he could not take her away. Instead, as he met the agonized panic in the boy's glance, he bade her stay until the doctors were ready for him.

The operating-room was overcrowded, and a passing nurse whispered to Ann to keep her patient amused, as it would be a long time before they would be ready for him. Amused! Ann looked pitifully down at the boy on the cot; he lay with his eyes screwed shut, and his lower lip caught tight in his teeth; agony was plainly written on his face. She laid aside her Thackeray, and bent over him; little drops of perspiration dotted his forehead, and his breath came raggedly. With an unaccustomed hand that trembled, she mopped his face with her handkerchief. At the

touch his eyes flew open; they were both tormented and terrified.

"Does it hurt so much?" Ann whispered, herself scarcely able to bear it.

Her patient nodded almost imperceptibly; he wet his lips with his tongue before he tried to speak. "It is my back," he gasped. "Tell them to hurry, won't you?"

Ann flew to the nearest doctor, and clamored for immediate attention. "He is suffering terribly," she cried. "You must take him in and operate."

The doctor looked at her gravely. "There's no use," he said. "He can't live anyway, and there are a dozen men ahead of him we have a chance to save."

"You mean—you'll just let him die?"

"We are doing the best we can. . . . We are so tired in there that we can scarcely stand. We've been operating since dawn. . . . I examined that boy's wound myself. Even if he had been operated on at once, he couldn't have been saved,—and now that gangrene has set in!" He shook his head sadly.

"You mean—he just has to die?"

"We all do, some day. . . . The time comes when no one can do anything to prevent it. . . . Go back and keep him as happy as you can. . . . Keep him hoping, that's the thing. You're new at this game, aren't you?"

Ann nodded, white-lipped.

"Well, the thing to do is to see that there isn't any unnecessary unhappiness; God knows there is enough

we can't help. Don't you let that boy know he is dying. Never mind about his soul, keep his heart up." He rushed off to his operating-room, and Ann returned to her task.

She was amazed at the cheerful sound of her voice as she assured her patient that his operation could wait. "You are all right," she said. "It hurts, I know,—but it will be better soon." She could not look at him, as he hung on her lying words, but she brought him water to sip, and bathed his face and wrists until his tension relaxed somewhat. She coaxed his mother's name from him, and wrote a little message for her, more hers than the dying boy's.

After a while he said, "I wish you would go on reading to me. I like the sound of your voice." Ann gratefully took up the magazine and continued her reading; the troubles of Catherine had lost their poignancy, but she turned page after page, with no idea of what she read.

Presently, when the dark was beginning to gather in the corners of the room, and the attendants had lighted the lamps on the mantle, the doctor to whom she had spoken came back. When he saw her, he walked across to her, and leaned over the cot. "How long have you been reading?" he said.

"I don't know. Hours, I think."

"You can stop, now."

The magazine dropped to the floor with a little crash, yet the figure on the cot did not stir. "Is he dead?" Ann whispered.

The doctor nodded, and beckoned an orderly over to him. "We'll get him out while the men are eating their supper. Did you have any trouble with him?"

Ann shook her head. She could not believe that while she had sat so close to him, death had snatched him away. Death! She had always supposed it came with pomp and a beating of wings,—not stealthily, like a footpad in the dark. . . . Death! She was tremulous and shaken. . . . As she forced herself to look down on the boy, she wished that he had not died with a grimace of agony on his face. She felt sick, and swallowed convulsively for an instant. He did not look different, she thought, and yet, everything was changed. . . . He was no more. . . . Her lips whispered the words stupidly. . . . And it could not be more than a half-hour since he had spoken to her;—since she had been able to serve him. . . . It was incredible.

"Did you get any information about his folks?"

Ann found her lips so dry that she could scarcely speak. "I have a note for his mother."

The doctor nodded quick approval. "That's good," he said. "It means a lot. Just add a line, and tell her he didn't suffer any. . . . You look about beat. Ever see any one die before?"

Ann shook her head. She was suddenly sorry for herself, and came near to bursting into tears.

"You'd better go home," the doctor advised. "You've done a good job here. When are you coming back?"

Ann's eyes dropped to the still form the orderly was covering with a sheet. . . . It seemed an indefinitely long time ago that work in the hospital had looked like a desirable adventure. . . . She shivered uncontrollably. "To-morrow," she said, her voice very low.

The safe pleasantness of the Washington Square house enveloped her in peaceful restfulness. As she climbed the steps, a vision of her cool room rose before her, incredibly enticing after the emotional strain of the day. All the way home she had been planning what she could say to the dead boy's mother; that task still confronted her, but she was glad she had it to do. She would, she thought, tell her guardian, very quietly, that her patient had died, and then she would get out her little desk, at which she had written only frivolous notes, and letters to Hendricks. . . . She put out her hand to ring the bell, but before she could sound its friendly jangle, the door was flung open, and there was Mrs. Renneslyer on the threshold. Ann shrank back; there was no one she would not rather have seen at the moment.

"I know all about where you have been, miss," the lady cried, and swept the girl into the library, where Mr. Cortlandt was reading his afternoon paper. Ann thought that there was more of reluctance than reproof in his manner, as he looked up at her.

"I'm glad I went, uncle," she said defiantly. "You know, yourself, that I was useful." She could not say any more; she could not bring herself to mention

the dead soldier in Mrs. Renneslyer's scandalized presence.

"Yes," Mr. Cortlandt admitted judicially, "you were."

"Hendricks," his sister said severely, "don't encourage her! How could you do such a thing, Ann, after we had all agreed it was improper?"

"Because I know you are all wrong," the girl answered, with a spirited lift of her head. "Uncle, —you saw me there. Is there anything improper in what I was doing?"

"Well, it is unconventional, my dear, for you to be there at all."

"So is war unconventional! If I were a boy I should run away to enlist, I suppose, but as I'm not, all I can do is to help take care of men who are—hurt. It's horrible being a woman, when there's a war!" She swung on Mrs. Renneslyer, "Go there yourself, and look at them, and tell me then whether it seems important if I am conventional or not!"

"I couldn't bear to set my foot in a hospital, Ann,—and my boy under arms! My nerves would never stand it,—and yours shouldn't, either!"

"Well," said the girl dryly, "I guess I haven't any nerves." Death! She had seen death that day, and they talked to her of nerves! "Uncle, may I go back to-morrow? See what I've promised to bring them!" She produced the crumpled piece of paper upon which she had, early in the day, written her list, and read from it, triumphantly, " 'Licorice, raspberry vinegar'—

to make a cold drink you know, uncle,—'a pipe and tobacco, horehound candy, a German Lutheran clergyman,'—that man was very ill, I'm afraid he may not live until morning,—'tooth picks, a comb, oranges and apples, pickles, plug tobacco.' "

"Plug tobacco!" Mrs. Renneslyer interrupted indignantly. "And you but seventeen!"

Mr. Cortlandt took in Ann's helpless vexation, and he smiled. "Yes," he said, "you may go back."

"She will become the talk of the town," his sister warned him.

"In that case," Mr. Cortlandt responded dryly, "it is just as well that there will be something fine to say of her." He drew Ann close to him, and she pressed her cool cheek against his gratefully. She didn't want to talk about her tragic experience until Mrs. Renneslyer had gone.

"I met a nice man there to-day," she volunteered placatingly, in hopes of creating a happier atmosphere, "a Mr. Whitman."

"Mr. Whitman?" her guardian smiled whimsically. "Not Walt, I presume?"

"But yes," said Ann eagerly, "that is just who he was. He says he is a poet." Her eyes wandered to the shelves where poetry was stored.

Two things happened very quickly. Mrs. Renneslyer shot up out of her seat as though it had suddenly become red-hot, and Mr. Cortlandt demanded sharply, "What did he say to you?" It seemed to Ann that he turned pale, but she knew that she must be mistaken.

"We talked about the wounded men," she said reasonably, "and he told me what I could do for them."

Mrs. Renneslyer cut in here, "You see, Hendricks, what the hospitals mean? Walt Whitman!"

"But," Ann protested, "I liked him. He is a nice man."

"Nice?" demanded Mrs. Renneslyer explosively. "Good heavens!"

Her brother frowned at her reprovingly. "'To the pure,' Clarissa, remember."

"You don't like him, do you, uncle?"

"No."

"Why not? I did."

"I don't know him."

"That's no reason. He is good,—and kind. Don't you like his poetry,—is that it? Is he a bad poet?"

"No, I think he may be a good one. Mr. Emerson thinks so,—and Mr. Dana, of *The Tribune,* is a great champion of his. But his subjects—!" He broke off, and now Ann thought his face was flushed. "We won't discuss it."

"I congratulate you on your wisdom," Mrs. Renneslyer said coldly, and Ann held her peace. She realized that the introduction of her new acquaintance into the conversation made her hospital service more bleakly undesirable than before.

Ill at ease, she wandered over to the bookcase; behind her back, she could feel that two pair of eyes were riveted upon her. Affecting nonchalance, she

stood looking over the shining titles. A thin little volume caught her attention.

"Enfants d'Adam?" she read aloud. "Did he write about Cain and Abel?"

"Ann," her guardian said ceremoniously, behind her, "we are waiting supper for you. Perhaps you would better go up and dress!"

And later, when she returned to get the book, it was gone. It made no difference, however, for she still had her letter to write.

CHAPTER XII

WASHINGTON—'SIXTY-ONE

HENDRICKS had been gone for a month and had written several persuasive letters before Mr. Cortlandt found it possible to go to Washington, and by that time Ann was so deeply involved in hospital service, that she had some difficulty in getting away. As they left the dock on the Baltimore and Ohio ferry, they each had a delightful sense of a holiday well earned.

Hendricks met them at the station; the first thing Ann saw, as she leaned to look out of the car window, was his beaming smile. He had, she observed, grown a mustache, and she had a startled sense of not liking it. She had been looking forward with impatience to seeing him again, but now that the meeting loomed imminent she was curiously reluctant. As she walked sedately down the car aisle behind her guardian she was struggling with a puerile sense of panic.

Hendricks enveloped her in a huge embrace, and kissed her; he held her at arm's length, rejoicing. "She looks tired out, sir," he said, as he took his uncle's hand. "Too much hospital nonsense!"

The color flew into Ann's face as she jerked herself free, but she said nothing; she did not even so much as glance at her guardian, for she was afraid lest he, too, might be criticizing Hendricks adversely.

They drove at once to the hotel, in an open barouche

which enabled Ann to look eagerly about her. Just outside the station were frame barracks; new and raw in the warm October sunlight.

"That must be where the Fifty-Fifth spent its first night, Hendricks!" she cried, her eyes shining, and he nodded, pleased that she remembered.

The town was full of uniforms, and important, hurrying orderlies. "This place has learned to make haste," Mr. Cortlandt observed approvingly, as they narrowly escaped a collision with a soldier on a galloping horse.

The hotels were all overcrowded, but Hendricks had reserved rooms for his uncle, and, after a few moments' wait in a swarming lobby, where Ann was pleasantly conscious of admiring glances flung at her by young men in uniform and older ones in black Prince Alberts, they went up-stairs. Their rooms were on a corner; from the windows she could see the massive portico of the Treasury Building, and beyond, the shrubbery surrounding the White House, gold colored and ruddy brown. Below her was the fascinating panorama of the street; men and women passed to and fro constantly, horsemen trotted through the crowd, negroes on street corners were offering flowers and fruit for sale, and from somewhere came the inspiriting sound of a band. Ann opened her window. The soft air enveloped her sweetly, and the strain of the fifes came shriller. As she looked the street was cleared for troops to pass; the band swung around the corner, with a massive crash of drums and horns,

and behind it came a regiment of cavalry. The officers were splendidly mounted, but the horses the men rode were not so good, and the lines were ragged as they made the turn.

"Not enough drill," Mr. Cortlandt commented grimly.

They marched on, company after company, while the music of the band grew gradually fainter; at the end was a group of mounted negroes, and a long string of baggage wagons, each with four horses and a rear-guard. Ann gasped. This was warfare.

Mr. Cortlandt put his hand on her shoulder. "Hendricks has the day off," he said, "and he suggests we ride over to Arlington."

"Where Colonel Lee lived?"

"Yes. General McDowell has his headquarters in the old Lee mansion, and a mile or so beyond twelve thousand of our men are encamped at Upton Hill. We might take a look at an outpost."

"Oh, what a heavenly plan!"

In half an hour they were riding through the streets on their way to the long bridge; ahead of them the Washington monument, blunt topped, but impressive, swam in an Indian summer haze, indefinite of outline and exquisite, against the spinning blue of the October sky. Ann's horse pranced pleasantly as she reined him in; the sun was warmer than it had been in New York, and infinitely more relaxing; she was conscious of a charming sense of well being, and she smiled, with exactly the same affectionate good com-

radeship, first into her uncle's eyes, and then into Hendricks'.

The opposite bank of the river brought the fighting abruptly nearer: the roads were cut into deep ruts by the heavy ammunition wagons, and the grassy sides were trampled by the feet of marching multitudes. On either hand the fences were torn away, and abandoned fires, which still smoked drearily, showed where men had camped the night before.

They rode on between wide fields where the grain stood in shocks, and woods where the air quivered with the glint of yellow falling leaves, until they came to the gates of what had been Robert E. Lee's estate. His house was high above the Potomac, set, like a challenge, directly opposite Washington.

Ann had never before seen anything so elegant as the grounds; the driveway made leisurely turns through shady groves, and past sunny open spaces where an occasional flower showed a brave color. On every hand, however, there were traces of war. Great circles were stamped under trees where saddle horses had been tied, and the gardens had been trampled into hopeless disorder. Tents for the guard had been set up between the arches of rose vines, and saddled and bridled horses were tied at intervals along a brick wall where the ivy hung thick and glossy, but was torn away in great bare patches.

On the edge of a clearing a gleam of white caught Ann's eye; it was a broken pedestal, standing in a for-

mal recess among fir trees; its statue was gone, and on its stubby shank it bore a roughly lettered legend "To H— with traitor Lee." Farther on Hendricks rode off through the trees and came back triumphantly with camellias in his hand. He gave them to Ann; they were exquisite things, one the clearest pink and one faintly yellow; it was the height of incongruity to find them placidly and perfectly blooming, and the girl wondered, as she slipped them under a button of her habit, for what woman they had first been planted, and if, only last spring, she had pruned their shining stalks.

The house loomed up ahead, thrusting a pale buff shoulder toward the curve of the driveway; it was a huge place, with an ample central building and wide-flung wings. It was, Ann thought, the sort of place a man would build for future generations,—for his sons' sons,—to inhabit, and looking at it, she felt sorry for Colonel Lee, as she called him, giving him the title he had borne in the United States Army.

"It must have been hard to give all this up," her guardian said, voicing her unspoken thought. "He must have cared a lot."

"Dirty traitor!" Hendricks said briefly, and reaching up, he seized a graciously bending bough, and, riding on, held it until it was torn from the tree, when he dropped it carelessly.

Mr. Cortlandt frowned. "He did what he thought was his duty, Hendricks. Make no mistake about Lee.

He is an honorable man,—mistaken, but a gentleman, although an enemy."

Ann's eyes shone on him for his generosity; she felt inexpressibly melancholy, as she slipped down from her horse quickly, before Hendricks, red-handed from his rape of the bough, could touch her. There was a terrace before the house, and on one side of the entrance a peacock clipped from box stood, grown somewhat shaggy, but eloquent of better days. His fellow was gone, only the mutilated stalks, cut off at the roots, showed where once he had preened, in elegant artificiality. On the plaster wall to the right of the door was a rude soldier's sketch of a hanging of Jeff Davis, done in heavy black lines, and with some skill in caricature.

The general was glad to see them, and showed them over the lower floor of the house, which remained much as the Lee family had left it, when they took flight. Here and there a heavy damask curtain had been torn from a window, and lay in a crumpled heap on the floor, and in almost every room some pieces of the delicate Sheraton furniture had proved inadequate to the repose of heavy soldiers: wrecked chairs were shoved into a corner, or lay broken in the fireplaces, and glass from secretary doors lay in shattered piles where it had fallen. Traces of men's occupation were everywhere. A saddle straddled the back of an Empire sofa in what had been the drawing-room, and boots sprawled on the Aubousson carpet. The dining table was littered with soiled glasses, empty bot-

tles, rinds of cheese, and pipes, while newspapers lay about, spread open, everywhere.

The general apologized for the confusion. "I'd hate to have Mrs. McDowell see what sort of housekeeper I am," he said, smiling at Ann. "But we do a deal of business from this place. I've sent all the George Washington silver, and the vases the French government gave him,—all the relics of his I could find,—over to the Interior Building for safe-keeping. They belong to Mrs. Lee of course; she inherited them from her father, who had them direct from Mr. Washington himself. I'd hate to have had anything happen to them, but the rest of the stuff I can't bother about."

The younger officers took the girl out to the terrace before the columned front of the house, and she paced back and forth with them, holding the long skirt of her habit above her shining black boots, while Mr. Cortlandt and General McDowell talked of dull things like equipment of troops.

Across the blue ribbon of the Potomac lay the Capital—a magic white city.

"How foolish they are," Ann cried, "to think that we would ever let them take—that!"

The young soldiers echoed her gaily. With their lives at stake, they boasted boyishly of what they proposed to do to the Johnnie Rebs.

Ann's attention was caught by the clusters of new buildings, which showed up white and raw, here and there in the environs of Washington.

"What are they?" she asked curiously.

A grave-faced captain answered her. "The barracks over yonder? The government is building hospitals."

"But—there are acres of them!" Ann cried aghast.

"It'll be a bloody business, ma'am, before we're done. The trouble with you northerners is you underestimate us."

He turned away as he spoke, and Ann whispered, "Who is he?"

"He's from Tennessee. There's no better Union man in the army, though."

The captain caught the words, and turned. "Yes," he drawled, "I reckon I'm a good Union man, all right. . . . I had a right smart start in business in Chattanooga, a home there, and all that, and now my family's been turned out, of course. They're in Chicago, my wife and two little girls, in a boarding-house. An' here I am, in a blue uniform, fightin' f'r the North, against my own brothers, an' my wife's father. . . . Yes, I reckon I've earned a right to be considered a good Union man. I've paid the price."

Ann looked at him with shining eyes, in the embarrassed silence which followed his outburst. She longed to tell him that she thought him an heroic figure, but instead she only murmured, inadequately, "I wish I lived in Chicago. I'd love to know your wife." Then the gaiety swelled out again, as irrepressible as youth.

When they rode on several of the officers received permission to go with them, and Hendricks was

crowded away from his coveted place by Ann's side. She smiled at him ruefully, but he made no attempt to hide his resentment, and Ann, in an effort to mask his silent gloom, forced herself to chatter feverishly. She was enormously irritated with him, and amazed that he could wilfully make himself so unattractive. Through her mind flashed a wonder if she would spend a good part of her life diverting attention from a sulky Hendricks, but she banished it, sternly.

There was incredible confusion in the advanced post. Men were setting up tents, artillery wagons were struggling through deeply rutted roads to the front, fires were started, and rations were being cooked. The visitors sniffed frying salt pork wistfully. There was no fighting going on, as the Confederates had withdrawn from Upton Hill without a contest, so it was possible to ride straight through the camp to where the sentinels kept a meticulous watch, and where, just ahead, the enemy might be pointed out. There Ann saw, for the first time, a Rebel flag; it flew above an opening in the trees, and the smoke of enemy campfires rose in friendly fashion, here and there along the line, but that was all;—no men were visible.

They came across the colonel, making the rounds of his outpost, and he begged well-known Mr. Cortlandt, the pretty girl and the group of brilliant young staff officers to come back to his tent for refreshment, before returning to Washington.

"Try our camp fare," he urged. "It is rough, but it is what your army fights on."

Ann accepted at once, eager to sample the soldiers' rations, but when, after some delay, the collation was prepared, it proved to be a rather elaborate luncheon, served with champagne from a box under the colonel's camp bedstead!

They were very gay over it; even Hendricks' gloom lightened with his second glass, but when they had finished they had to hurry back to Washington, lest Lieutenant Renneslyer should overstay his leave. The escort of young officers parted from them regretfully at the gates of the Lee mansion, and Ann and Mr. Cortlandt and Hendricks trotted steadily on, making the best time they might, picking their way over the rough roads of the long downward slope. They had little opportunity for conversation until the bridge was reached, when they pulled the horses down to a walk. Then Hendricks spoke, with an air of one who unburdens himself of something he has long had on his mind.

"Ann, I'm not sure I shall allow you to go on with this hospital work. I don't half like it."

"Allow!" cried the girl, flashing an angry glance at him. "What a word!"

"Surely I have a right to decide what is best for you!"

Mr. Cortlandt coughed deprecatingly, but no one noticed him. Ann was frankly aghast. Was this what it meant to become engaged, she wondered? Must she submit to Hendricks' judgment,—she who so seldom agreed with him?

"I wouldn't stop working in the hospitals, even if uncle told me to," she said, with heightened color.

Mr. Cortlandt hastened to intervene. "In that case, my dear, I shan't interfere. . . . But I think you are wrong in this, Hendricks. . . . I entirely approve of her work. It has my sanction."

At this important support, the boy allowed the subject to drop, but he relapsed into gloom again, and did not emerge when he left them, on the outskirts of town.

At the hotel Ann learned that there was to be a reception that evening at the White House.

"Couldn't we get invitations?" she demanded of Mr. Cortlandt.

He laughed. "We wouldn't need any, my child. The whole world is free to walk in."

"Then we will go?"

"It will be a frightful crush."

"I don't care. We needn't stay long, uncle, but I must see the president."

"That's a good reason for going, I'll admit," he allowed, yielding with a sigh.

The crowd was extraordinarily varied. Congressmen from agricultural districts, bearing timid rural wives on their arms, clumped in, in thick boots. Elegant young men from foreign embassies sauntered through the throng, detached and amused at this spectacle of democracy, generals in gala uniform stood importantly about, fashionable creatures, dressed, like Ann, in their best, maneuvered their vast skirts skil-

fully, shrewd-eyed gentlemen, who were in Washington angling for contracts, lay in wait for senators or cabinet members, and plain people of the inconspicuous walks of life rubbed elbows with the rich and great. Here and there were eddies of men and women about some well-known person. Mr. Stanton's broad shoulders and massive head rose above a close group of his admirers, to whom he was pointing out the necessity for haste in bringing the army to fighting efficiency, and in a corner, partly withdrawn from the crowd, the tall and venerably insignificant secretary of the navy was explaining why he was as yet unwilling to commit the government to the purchase of iron boats now building at Boston.

The president stood at the door of the second parlor, with a secretary beside him who gave him the names of his callers. Ann's first impression was of his extraordinary height, for he towered over the people about him, and then the amazing charm of his face caught her;—tragic, humorous, distinguished and kindly, she adored him, at first sight. He was obviously bored at the tiresome ceremony of handshaking, but as obviously determined to go through with it with painstaking courtesy; he had a routine of greeting, "I am charmed to see you here," he said, over and over, with a look of grave concern. When Mr. Cortlandt turned up in line, however, his face brightened amazingly. "My dear friend," he said, "what a horrible occasion for you!" He laughed, and became another man from the care-worn host of a moment before.

Mr. Cortlandt presented Ann, and the president shook her hand warmly, looking deeply into her ardent eyes, with the penetrating glance of a man who is a rapid judge of character. "You'll find Mrs. Lincoln over yonder," he said. "I wish I could take you to her."

The secretary spoke another name, and Ann and her guardian were swept on. "That's over," Mr. Cortlandt sighed, relieved.

Mrs. Lincoln was surrounded by a group of ladies, whose crinolines and trains sheltered her from the throng. She was dressed with great elegance, and seemed a much more worldly creature than her husband, but she responded to Mr. Cortlandt's salutations somewhat vaguely, and paid Ann only the conventional recognition of her bow.

The rooms were becoming more crowded, and Mr. Cortlandt soon declared it was time to go back to the hotel. As they stood under the high white portico of the entrance, waiting for their carriage, they were joined by three of the young staff officers who had ridden with them in the morning to the advanced post.

"We came over in hopes of seeing you again," they told Ann joyously. "There is dancing at the hotel every night, you know, and it is quite gay, as the officers ride in from the outposts, when the fighting is over, for the night."

Dancing! Ann's regrets at leaving the reception vanished. She glanced at her guardian to see how

this suggestion appealed to him. He met her eager eyes, and laughed. "Seventeen!" he said good-naturedly.

It was exactly like a ball, at the hotel. A band played perfect polkas and waltzes, and its leader called out the quadrille figures like a general directing his army. Ann had never had so delightful a time. Her three officers were most attentive; they filled her card with their initials, and brought other young men to be introduced to her. When midnight came, and the musicians brought the evening to a close with a final glorious redowa, she was flushed and breathless, and very happy. She had quite overcome the uncomfortable feeling Hendricks had left with her, earlier in the day.

CHAPTER XIII

FLIGHT

THE following day there was a great review of the troops by General McClellan. Mr. Cortlandt and his ward drove out to the field east of the capitol in an open carriage; they attracted much attention, for the distinguished-looking old man, with his aquiline face and spare erect figure, and the blooming girl beside him whose voluminous silken skirts filled all the carriage, were not a couple to pass unobserved. They had no sooner taken their place on the side of the field than their barouche was surrounded, and Ann found several attentive young men at hand, eager to explain the maneuvers to her. They were not very complicated, for the officers wisely confined the movements to passing in review and defiling, but although the drill was simple, the lines were wavering and uneven. There were nine batteries of artillery, with fifty-four guns of various models, all new and in perfect order, and three thousand cavalry in line, only fairly well mounted, but all very dashing and gallant-looking. Ann was entirely satisfied with the martial effect; she was inclined to be impatient with her guardian, when he talked of lack of sufficient training, and of shoddy in the cloth the smart new uniforms were made of.

When the review was over and Hendricks was free

to join them, he found Ann chatting, with smiling eyes and lips, with a slim young horseman in civilian dress. As he approached he resentfully observed that they were talking in French, and he marveled at Ann's ease in the foreign language. When her brilliant glance fell on her lover, it seemed to him that she merely included him in her general radiant smile. He approached sulkily and greeted her with an air of stern proprietorship. The young Frenchman lifted a supercilious eyebrow at his manner with so lovely a lady.

"How do you do, Hendricks?" the girl said demurely. "I want to present you to the Duc de Chartres." Amazing girl,—she said it as easily as if titles had slipped from her tongue ever since she had learned to speak!

As Hendricks faced his first duke in the flesh, he was seized by a paralyzing embarrassment that took the form of making him appear sulkier than before. He had never succeeded in mastering a foreign tongue, and he cast resentfully about in his small French vocabulary for words that would impress the elegant young officer. As it happened, however, he said,—"Monsieur,—" and halted, for the lack of verbs.

"It is my cousin," Ann murmured, as though no warmer tie bound them.

"Ah,—your cousin!" Realizing Hendricks' embarrassment, the young stranger spoke in careful English. "I congratulate you, Monsieur."

"Thank you," Hendricks blurted out. "Is it because

I am her cousin—or because I am going to marry her?"

"So?" inquired the Frenchman. "In every way, then, I offer you my felicitations!" He did not linger after that, but rode over to join the little knot of officers about General McClellan, to whom he had offered his services for the war. There seemed to Hendricks to be a sort of foreign showiness in his manner of reining in his spirited horse. He said so, insularly.

Ann turned indignantly on him. "Why did you have to spoil it all?" she demanded.

"Didn't you want him to know that we are engaged?" Hendricks' voice was stern.

"I didn't mind that, of course,—at least,—I hope I didn't. . . . Only it sounded very awkward,—coming out with it, like that! Oh, look, Hendricks! There is Mr. Lincoln,—in that carriage with all those children!"

She gazed eagerly, and when the president returned Mr. Cortlandt's bow she bowed, too, and squeezed her guardian's hand. She wished that she could salute him, as Hendricks did.

"I think he is splendid," she declared, flushed with enthusiasm.

That night the Fifty-Fifth New York entertained distinguished guests at dinner in the officers' dining tent. The soldiers had hung the canvas walls with flags,—the Tricolor and the Stars and Stripes were crossed fraternally,—and the French cooks of the regi-

ment outdid themselves, for the President and Mrs. Lincoln ate with the officers' mess, together with a large and imposing company. Ann's eyes sparkled as she swept into her place between the major and Hendricks. She told them, turning alertly from one to the other, that she had never seen anything so brilliant as the long table. It was bright with uniforms and the gay toilets of the ladies, all focussed on the ungainly man in black civilian's clothes at the head of the tent. The excitement went to her head somewhat, and she amazed Hendricks by the rapidity and inconsequence of her remarks.

He plucked at her sleeve, and whispered, "Ann, you are talking too much."

The girl laughed; her clear eyes were tranquil. "Nonsense," she said, "he likes it, your major."

The boy leaned forward to look. It was true, quite obviously, for the man was looking into Ann's eyes with a smiling attention, and something within Hendricks whispered disquietly that Ann could make a fool of his middle-aged major,—he was all of thirty,—had she wished.

The meal was a miracle of field cookery, and the president dined well. It was evident that he responded gratefully to this break in the solemnity of his responsible days. Hendricks was not near enough to hear what he was saying, but he could catch the laughter that followed his brief remarks; that end of the table was very gay.

"What can he be saying, Hendricks?" Ann whis-

pered to him. "Don't you wish you knew? See uncle laugh! It is awfully good for him. Why is the colonel standing up?"

"For the toast," Hendricks said importantly.

"Oh!"

"To the President of the Republic. May he quickly see the reestablishment of the Union under his administration:—not so soon, however, but that the Fifty-Fifth may have an opportunity to contribute to it on some field of honor!"

The regiment rose, shouting, and Ann shot to her feet with a visible shiver of excitement. She looked so pretty, in her flushed eagerness, that Hendricks missed the greater part of the president's reply; he only took in his closing remarks. "All I can say is, that if you fight as well as you treat your guests, victory is assured to us!—And since the Union may not be reestablished before the Fifty-Fifth has had its battle,—I drink to the battle of the Fifty-Fifth. And," he added, half droll, half serious,—"I wish that it may be fought as soon as possible." Laughter, hand-clapping and cheers rose clamorously about him as he made his farewells, and as he went through the camp, those left behind in the mess tent could follow his progress by the shouting of the soldiers.

Mr. Cortlandt lingered to talk commissary with the colonel, and the delay gave Hendricks his opportunity. Ann made no objections to being drawn away from the gallant attentions of an entire mess; she went, with the utmost docility, to stroll in the moonlight, but it

seemed to the boy that she was strangely quiet, following so closely upon her animation at the table. He adroitly drew her away from the crowded camp, along the edge of the creek to a place where the trees grew thick. On the verge of the black shade the girl paused, with a little laugh that trembled.

"Come on," Hendricks urged impatiently. "It is pretty here!" He seized her hands and pulled her forward. "I haven't seen you all day," he complained.

"There hasn't been time," Ann said listlessly. She turned her head to catch the chorus of a song in the camp behind them. "It is wet here," she complained, as she stepped into the deeper shade.

Suddenly Hendricks flung his arm around her, and crushed her to him; all his day's despondency flared into a sudden gust of passion that surprised him as much as it did the girl. She tried to push him away, but in an instant his lips found hers and he was kissing her fiercely. When he let her go they were both breathless.

"Oh!" gasped Ann. "How rough you are!" It was not too dark for him to see that her eyes blazed in her white face.

Panic seized him. "I am sorry," he said humbly. "Really, Ann. . . . I didn't mean to."

They went back to the camp at once, so quickly that Hendricks had only an impression of Ann's flying draperies, and just ahead of him, her profile, cut keen and black against the moonlight. When he reviewed that five minutes, after his uncle had taken the girl

back to town, he could not remember that she had spoken at all, but he recalled vividly, with a hot flush of resentment, how she had leaped a tiny brook, rather than take his hand. He told himself, as he settled down to sleep that night, that the next day he would get leave of absence and make it up with her, but when he reached Washington, at noon, he found that Ann and her uncle had already left for New York.

CHAPTER XIV

CHRISTMAS IN WASHINGTON SQUARE

HENDRICKS wrote that he had been promised a leave of absence for Christmas long enough to enable him to come home, and preparations were made for an unprecedented family celebration in Washington Square. The tree was taller and wider flung than ever before, and Ann was determined that it should outshine all previous ones. It arrived two days before Christmas, and at once she climbed up on a high ladder and began the work of trimming it. Fanny had strung yards of popcorn and cranberries, which she draped from one branch to another, and she herself had gilded nuts and made festoons of colored paper, which glittered gaily against the deep green of the fir. Here and there she placed a foolish martial trinket, with Hendricks' name attached, and on the very top of the tree, instead of the usual white-winged angel, she fixed a blue-coated soldier, with his cap tilted rakishly to one side.

"That's all right, anyway," she murmured to herself, and sighed. She made no move toward descending. It was warm, up there near the ceiling, and the air was heavy with the delicious scent of Christmas greens. She sat down on the giddy top of the ladder, chin in hand, and plunged into serious thought. . . . Hendricks. . . . Why couldn't

he, when she tried so hard, recapture some of her early passion for him? . . . Why should her thoughts always stick on that last unfortunate episode of her visit to Washington, three months ago? It was strange that no amount of dutiful letter-writing had served to overlay it; she could not escape from a recollection of it, and a sort of shuddering fear of the future. . . . She wished, as she sat miserably on her ladder, that Hendricks were not an only nephew of Mr. Cortlandt. She thought that if she felt free to jilt him, perhaps she would not want to. . . . Did she, she wondered, really want to? She drew his ring from her finger reluctantly; her hand looked very strange and empty without it. . . . She resolutely thought of some other girl wearing it, her ring, and she hastily put it on again, overwhelmed with a stubborn resolve to keep it. It was all very perplexing.

The door-bell jingled, and in a moment Fanny came in, her hands full of packages, and her eyes shining with happiness.

"What a lovely tree!" she cried. "What beautiful trimmings!" She came over to the foot of the ladder. "See," she said, "I've brought those socks I have been knitting for Hendricks,—a half dozen pair . . . and mama's camp kit. . . . What are you giving him, Ann?"

"I had my daguerreotype taken." Ann catapulted swiftly and dangerously down the rickety steps, and selected a flat purple velvet case from the heap of presents at the foot of the tree. She opened it, and

looked at it with some satisfaction. "I look rather nice. You would never know I had red hair: Hendricks will like that," she commented, giving it to Fanny. The picture showed a slim and elegant young creature, who leaned romantically on a bit of rustic fence, and whose large eyes were sad.

"I thought that possibly you might be married while Hendricks is here." Fanny's tone was indifferent.

"No." Ann dropped the monosyllable without so much as a glance.

"Aunt Clarissa said Hendricks wanted you to come over and be married in camp."

"Unfortunately there was a wedding like that in his regiment,—brides' maids and wedding veils, and everything,—and Hendricks went. He thought it was awfully romantic."

"It was."

"I suppose so, but I couldn't seem to take any interest in it."

Fanny shot a speculative glance at her friend, and Ann knew that she considered her love-affair but a lukewarm thing. She was glad when Joseph came into the room. He gave her a telegram, and stood rolling his eyes admiringly at the tree.

Ann ripped open the envelope. "Uncle says I am always to read them," she explained. "These days, he doesn't like to have them wait." She drew out the enclosure, and read.

"What is it, Ann?" whispered Fanny, frightened at the flash of emotion in her friend's face.

"Hendricks can't come." She dared say no more, lest her sense of reprieve should betray itself.

"Can't come?" Fanny's wailing voice was desperate.

"No. He says his furlough has been canceled. . . . Uncle will be awfully disappointed."

"And how about Hendricks? Won't he be disappointed too? And all of us?"

"Yes, of course. . . . What a shame!" She absently fixed a candle or two on the wide branches of the tree. "I am awfully sorry, Fanny," she murmured consolingly, after a moment's preoccupation.

At these words Fanny disconcertingly began to cry; she did not frankly abandon herself to grief, but she did wipe her eyes, and she made surreptitious dabs at her nose, in a pathetic effort to conceal her weakness. Ann refrained from looking at her, considerately, and the difficult moment would have passed in comparative comfort, had not Mrs. Renneslyer chosen that inauspicious time to come into the room.

"Good morning, children," she called. "Ann, come and kiss your mama-that-is-to-be! Fanny—why, what in the world is the matter with you?"

At this sharp attack, her niece frankly abandoned herself to tears; she sobbed openly, and left the conversational field to Ann.

"What is the matter with Fanny, Ann?"

"I am sorry. . . . Hendricks can't come. He just telegraphed uncle." She held out the message, wondering why guilt, of all sensations, should be the one to possess her.

"It is an outrage!" Mrs. Renneslyer declared. "Christmas Day,—and no furlough! Who ever heard of such a thing? I wonder what your uncle will think of his Mr. Lincoln now?" Her indignant glance fell on Ann. "You don't cry, do you?" she demanded pointedly, as she searched the girl's face with hostile eyes.

"I never do," Ann hastened to plead. "Except at silly things,—the theater, or a book." She envied Fanny her facile emotion.

"Why he adores you so—" Mrs. Renneslyer broke off, and sighed. "Poor boy,—alone, at this season!" She sighed again and sank down on the sofa, only to spring youthfully to her feet, almost at once. "Girls—I have an inspiration!"

Ann looked up questioningly, and Fanny stayed her sobs to listen. "We could all go to Washington! We could have dinner with Hendricks to-morrow! I am sure Mr. Lincoln wouldn't begrudge him that!"

"Oh, Aunt Clarissa!" Fanny murmured ecstatically. She and Mrs. Renneslyer both turned to Ann.

"We might," the girl allowed, her mind on the practical details of the migration.

"Don't let your enthusiasm sweep you off your feet, Ann."

"I was only wondering if uncle could find it possible to go."

"Go where?" a deeper voice broke in. They all looked up, startled, to see her guardian in the doorway.

"To Washington, Hendricks," Mrs. Renneslyer

flung at him. "We are all going over on the six o'clock train."

Ann caught his bewildered glance. "Hendricks can't come," she explained again, "and Mrs. Renneslyer suggests that we all go to spend Christmas with him."

The old man's face fell. "Too bad," he said despondently. "I had hoped for one more Christmas here together. . . . However,—it can't be helped. Hendricks is a soldier; he is not his own master."

"There is a reception at the White House on New Year's Day, too," Mrs. Renneslyer put in.

"Uncle Hendricks, please?"

Mr. Cortlandt smiled. "You want to go,—eh, Fanny? How about it, Ann?"

"It will be Hendricks' last Christmas before he goes to the front, uncle."

"That settles it. We shall go. . . . Fanny,—run home and tell your mother. Clarissa,—you would better get about your packing, and make sure that Theodore knows the train time, so that if he misses it, you can have the satisfaction of putting him in the wrong! Ann, what shall we do with our tree?"

"Could I send it to the hospital?"

He laughed at her vivid eagerness. "How did you ever happen to think of that?" he teased her smilingly, but his sister tossed her head impatiently, and Ann knew that she would have preferred to see her oblivious to everything but the expected meeting.

Mr. Cortlandt went immediately to his office, as he

had arrangements to make before leaving town so unexpectedly, and it was arranged that they would all meet at the ferry in time for the train. There were many things for Ann to attend to; she wrapped presents and such Christmas goodies as might be transported, with enthusiastic expedition, before she turned to her personal packing.

As she climbed the stairs to her room she was aware of a sudden drop in her spirits, and her feet lagged. "Washington," she murmured to herself. "Hum." This time she was fairly caught. Her trunk was waiting for her; she took out her dresses and laid them on the bed as a preliminary to packing, and there, in the depths of her closet, hung the very yellow taffeta she had last worn on the day of General McClellan's review. She looked at it with startled eyes for a moment, and the whole distressing fiasco of her disillusionizing visit flashed vividly before her. All at once she knew that nothing would make her go to Washington. She carefully rehung her dresses in the closet, one by one, and shut the door firmly upon them; then she sat down to think.

When Fanny came hurrying in, an hour later, to see if her friend was ready, she found Ann in bed, with the covers tucked under her chin, and a wet towel bound around her forehead. "Isn't it a pity?" she murmured faintly; "I am not able to go."

"Ann! You must come! Hendricks will be disappointed."

"It breaks my heart not to spend Christmas with uncle," Ann said truthfully, "but it can't be helped."

Mrs. William Cortlandt came panting up-stairs to see what caused the delay, but even her efficient suggestions were useless, and in a few moments she gave up, and hurried off to the ferry. The girl lay where she left her, looking up at the ceiling with wide and miserable eyes.

The next morning she was miraculously better, and she told Joseph that she would spend the day in the hospital. In the cold light of the winter morning her emotion of the night seemed childish, and she came very near sinking back into the comfortable belief that she must care for Hendricks, because she was engaged to marry him. She was disposed to regret having missed the gaiety of a trip to the capital.

On her way along the Square, after her lonely breakfast, something happened to disturb this pleasant serenity; it was an incident trivial enough in itself, but sufficiently upsetting to Ann to amount to an adventure. On the corner of the little park, where the paths met, she came face to face with a young man. She had been subconsciously aware of his approach, but she did not notice him particularly until he was almost upon her; then she took in the fact that he was a well set up youth, with eyes made bold by an evident admiration of her. Their glances clashed, Ann automatically looked away and passed on. Into her mind flashed the unbidden thought, "I'd rather

marry him than Hendricks!" It was nothing; it was less than nothing,—and yet to the girl the vagrant disloyalty was startling; it amounted almost to infidelity. She felt miserably unworthy of Hendricks' single-minded affection, but in a curious fashion this acknowledgment of guilt made her cling to him the more, in a futile desire to make it up to him. She was, however, suddenly glad, after all, that she had not gone to Washington.

She was warmly welcomed at the hospital, as the other volunteer women were, in the holiday season, devoting themselves to their families, and the sick men were forlorn enough until Ann appeared, her eyes shining with the delight of giving so much pleasure. She set up her tree in the hall where all the convalescents might see it, and even the men in beds on the first floor could catch a festive glimpse of it, through open doors. On Christmas Eve they had a fine celebration, and Ann felt that never before had she known such complete "good will toward men."

The next morning she was back at her post again, and her cheerful "Merry Christmas" was echoed enthusiastically up and down the wards. She ate her luncheon with the convalescents, sharing with them the multitude of good things that had been prepared for the Cortlandt family celebration, and she did not go home until late, for, as the night approached, she hated to return to her empty house. As she ran up the front steps she smiled to see that the lights were brilliant. "Good old Joseph!" she thought, as she rang. She

could hear the fire crackling when the door opened, and she followed the cheerful sound; standing on the hearth in the library was Mr. Cortlandt, smiling at her amazement.

"Uncle!" she gasped, as she flung her arms around him. "I was so lonely!"

"Did you think I would leave you all alone for Christmas?"

"But—didn't you go to Washington, either?"

"I did,—and I saw Hendricks, which was my only object in going. . . He spent the evening with us, and I came home on the midnight train. . . . I told Joseph to have an especially fine supper—"

"Oh, uncle!" gasped Ann, horror-struck. "I have given away every single thing in the house!"

"So he said," the old man returned, smiling. "And we are to eat a Christmas dinner composed of warmed-over chicken! What do you think of that?"

"I am so sorry!"

"Nonsense! Joseph is to open a bottle of that last champagne I had out from France, and I bought some flowers for the table, as I came through town. . . . Run and put on your prettiest dress!—No, don't thank me for coming. I am just a very selfish old man. I wanted to eat my Christmas dinner with my girl!"

Joseph had set their places at a small table drawn close to the fire in the shadowy library, and they were very gay, in spite of the depleted menu.

"Do you remember, my dear, your first Christmas?"

Ann's eyes suddenly filled with tears. "Do I re-

member?" she echoed. "It was after my mother had sailed, but before we heard—" she broke off, shivering a little. "What a forlorn thing I was, uncle,—and how wonderfully good you were to me! . . . Those days! I can remember how frightened I was all the time, until you came home!" She reached across the table and squeezed his hand affectionately.

When Joseph poured the champagne Mr. Cortlandt told him to fill a glass for Ann, too, and he gave her the toast, "Our soldiers, Ann,—a merry Christmas to them! And to our country,—and victory!"

They drank it, eye to eye across the narrow table, and then they sat down to their creamed chicken and sausage. Mr. Cortlandt exerted himself to be amusing; it was a long time since they had been so gay, and they decided, over their simple dessert, that this was, after all, the best Christmas of them all. It was not until after dinner, as they sat before the library fire, that they touched on the subject of Hendricks.

"The boy looks well," Mr. Cortlandt said, his eyes on Ann's face. "He seems older, and he is doing good work; there is no doubt about his being an excellent soldier. I am very proud of him."

"I am so glad," the girl murmured softly.

"He was sorry not to see you."

Ann's face clouded. "I suppose so," she said.

"I want to ask you a question, my dear. Will you answer it?"

Ann threw him a nervous glance. "Of course I will."

"Did you really have a headache?"

She flinched back into her chair, but her eyes met his squarely, as she shook her head.

"Didn't you want to see Hendricks?"

"I am not sure I care for him, uncle. . . . And I am not sure I don't."

"But," Mr. Cortlandt interposed reasonably, "you seemed greatly attached to him when he went away."

"Yes. . . . It's when he comes home that I am not so sure."

"I am sorry, my dear. When you first became engaged to my nephew I was not too well pleased,—but now! In God's name, Ann,—if you loved him when he was a conceited puppy from school, why can't you love him now that he promises to make a fine officer?"

"Perhaps I do. . . . I can't be sure."

That ended the matter. Ann couldn't be sure, and that was all there was to be said. The cozy Christmas evening ended in rather a chill of disappointment.

Late in February Hendricks obtained a second leave of absence in order to come to New York, and only Mr. Cortlandt's decided refusal to countenance it kept Mrs. Renneslyer from clamoring for a hasty wedding while her son was at home. Ann received the news of his arrival with the proper expressions of pleasure, but her guardian thought that her enthusiasm was forced, and her sudden nervous docility depressed him. He had an amazing sense of relief when a second telegram announced that the regiment was at last ordered

to break camp, and that Hendricks' furlough had again been canceled.

"Off to the front!" The whole family thrilled to the words, in common with an anxious country, relieved to see action at last, in the long dormant Army of the Potomac. The New York papers were filled with reports of the home regiments, and Ann was able, day by day, to trace Hendricks' progress through the enemy's country. As a delayed and reluctant spring rushed into a hot summer, she learned the dismal trick of searching the published list of the dead, wounded and missing, but the casualties of the Fifty-Fifth were light in its early engagements. At intervals letters came through from Hendricks, who seemed much more concerned over a shortage of tents than he was at having been under fire. He hated the hot southern summer, and the dried-up southern fall, but time passed and he remained unscathed. It seemed a miracle to Ann, who saw so many wounded men in the hospital that it was incredible to her any one should escape.

She continued her work. As the numbers of sick men doubled, she doubled her efforts; there seemed no end to her vitality, no limit to her capacity to serve. Hendricks, whom she had not seen for so long, became a more and more unreal lover, but her engagement was not the more desirable to her because of that. She tried not to think of it, as the months ran on.

CHAPTER XV

DENSLEY HOWARD

It was a morning almost like summer, in the early spring of 1863. The sunlight was as warm as a friendly hand, but in the shade a thin disagreeable coldness lurked. Ann lingered on the hospital doorstep, deep, under its portico, in wintry shadow; she looked reluctantly back at the shining streets and up at the sky, high, faintly blue, and delightfully empty. She would like her life to be like that, she though, remote and beautiful.

She was enormously tired, after two years of doing the same dreary thing day after day; her very soul was weary of illness and of pain. Routine was always the thing she found most difficult to bear, and there is no routine more rigid than that which prevails in a hospital. Ann sometimes thought that she would not be so rebellious with it, had her life outside been diversified,—but there, too, nothing happened. Mr. Cortlandt was overworked and weary, and Hendricks had never once, in the two years since his reenlistment, been able to get a leave of absence long enough for a visit to New York. Every Sunday morning she wrote to him, with painstaking regularity,—that, too, had become a routine,—and now and then answers came through; it was her custom to pass these letters of his

about the family circle, for her lover was a temperate writer; there were no intimacies for her eyes alone.

She sighed, and opened the door. A rush of bad air swept out at her, and the gloom of the hallway yawned before her. Ann shook herself petulantly. "If something would only happen," she murmured, half aloud.

The first doctor she met said to her, "Miss Byrne, have you seen our new patient?"

Ann shook her head, and he lead her across the ward to point out a man who had been brought in during the night.

"From Libby Prison," he explained briefly.

The girl's eyes opened wide; this was a dramatic happening. "From Libby!" she exclaimed, and moved eagerly forward. He was the first man to be received at the hospital from the plague spot of Richmond; she bent commiseratingly over him, as he lay, white and apparently unconscious, on his cot. "Poor fellow," she murmured, "he looks very ill."

The doctor nodded. . . . "He was a bad exchange," he said brutally. "We can't pull him through, I am afraid. . . . He was unconscious when he came in from the train."

Ann studied the emaciated face on the pillow, and thought that, in all her experience in the hospitals, she had never seen any one in a more forlorn condition than this newcomer. He was, in the first place, thin beyond belief; his cheek-bones stuck out like headlands above a rough blond beard, and below it, the chords

of his throat showed pitifully. His face was very white, under its grime of travel; he might easily have been dead as he lay there, and Ann put out a frightened hand, and pushed the fair hair back from his wasted temples. His skin was hot to the touch, and with the hair swept back, his face looked young and weak, in its defenselessness. Her touch roused the man, and suddenly his eyes opened wide for a moment. They seemed enormous, in his dead-white face, and they were deliciously, penetratingly, blue. His lips parted, and drew down in the ghost of a cynical smile.

"I never felt softer ones," he murmured.

Ann retreated swiftly, but the nameless patient had already lapsed back into unconsciousness.

All day she had him in her mind, as she went about her round of duties; it was extraordinary how often she contrived to pass the cot where he lay. He was less forlorn when he had been washed and brushed; she almost thought that there was something familiar about him, and she hoped, quite foolishly and femininely, that those very blue eyes were not destined to close forever. Shortly after noon he revived again, and a little brandy was put between his passive lips. Ann stole over to watch the effect: she was near enough to hear quite distinctly his protesting murmur, "That's a damn bad liquor!" and she ran to the office to get him a bottle of especially good old stock provided by her guardian. A second spoonful of this stirred him to something resembling a faint vitality. He fixed his eyes on Ann's and said amiably:

"You'll have me as drunk as a lord, if you give me much of that on an empty stomach."

"I'll get you something to eat," she volunteered eagerly.

The man frowned impatiently. "It is easier not," he murmured.

"I'll feed you," Ann offered. She commandeered a bowl of soup from a passing nurse.

Her patient obviously did not want the soup, and equally obviously, disliked to say so, in the face of Ann's eager helpfulness; it was an unfair advantage that she often used, and now she made him take almost the entire bowlful.

When she finally desisted, and the man lay flat again, exhausted by the little effort of lifting his head, he said politely, "Thank you. . . . I wish I felt the way you look."

"The way I look?" she repeated encouragingly. She wanted him to talk.

The soup was having its effect, and there was more strength to his voice as he said, "You are the most living thing I ever saw. . . . You can't imagine, —after Libby,—to find—you!" Under his steady gaze Ann played nervously and aimlessly with his bowl and spoon. "Do you mind telling me where I am?" he went on, affably.

"You are in an army hospital, in New York."

"New York? . . . It goes to prove what I have always said,—the place has no atmosphere. . . . Put me in Paris, dying, and I'd know,—and hate

to die! . . . Or Florence,—there'd be something there to whisper to my spirit, and keep me happy to the verge. . . . Well,—'this is my own, my native land!' "

"I wish you would tell me your name."

"Densley Howard."

"Oh!" There was a startled note in Ann's exclamation, but after her first instinctive movement she did not draw back. Instead she met his eyes bravely and smiled, albeit a bit unnaturally. "We are neighbors," she said.

"Are we?" his tone was indifferent.

"I am Hendricks Cortlandt's niece."

Howard smiled in his turn, polite, but wan. "I remember," he said. "The red-haired little devil who used to shy stones at my horse, when the governess wasn't looking!" He closed his eyes on that quite definitely, and almost immediately he was asleep.

Ann stood gazing gravely down on him. He didn't, she reflected, look bad. He looked, instead, although the girl did not know it, like a stricken Saint Michael, or an exhausted, defeated, Saint John. . . . He looked extraordinarily young, too. She knew him to be at least ten years her senior, and his reference to the past brought up a contrasting picture of a slim young god on a too-spirited horse, whose Byronic good looks were a subject of alarm to the mothers in Washington Square. . . . She remembered vague but persistent rumors of mysterious deeds. . . . He was, in the language of the Square, "wild." . . .

She wondered. . . . He didn't look wild,—she thought he had a look of almost boyish sweetness. . . . He had lived for years in Europe, and she recalled a chance grim comment of her guardian's that that was the best place for him. . . . She had heard that he had come home to join the Union Army, but she had carelessly acquiesced in Mrs. William's decision that this rumor of white deeds on the part of a black sheep could not be authentic. . . . And now, here he was, one of the first victims of Libby Prison. Surely, nothing else mattered, and she didn't care if it did!

The next morning she found the hospital ringing with his exploits. "What do you think he made me do!" a nurse demanded of Ann. "He made me bring in a barber to shave him, and he dying as he lies there! He has had his beard all taken off. . . . He arranged with the man to come every day, and joked with him about shaving him after he was dead!"

"He must be better."

"He is, but he's none too strong."

Nevertheless the newcomer hailed her weakly, as she would have passed his cot with only a shy smile. He looked like a stranger, with his lean jaws close shaven; his eyes were enormous, and smudged in with black shadows.

"Haven't you been brought up to say good morning?" he demanded, gaily.

Ann paused, while she solemnly selected a carnation

pink from the handful she carried. She had chosen to put on a new dress that day, and it was vastly becoming to her. "I brought you this," she said, smiling tentatively as she went to lay her flower on the table beside his bed.

Unexpectedly, he caught her fingers, and she could feel that his were ominously hot. "Thank you," he said. When she would have withdrawn her hand, he drew it to his lips and kissed it.

The girl's eyes widened, and she caught her fingers away tempestuously, but in the face of Howard's apparent innocent pleasure in his friendly act she felt that she was being gauche and awkward, so she said nothing. She told herself that this gallantry was usual in those European countries he had frequented.

"Do you know," the young man went smoothly on, "I have a confession to make to you?" He paused, and Ann's grave eyes interrogated him. "In the night, when I didn't sleep, I lay and thought about you. . . . You came in here, when I was just decently dying,—when I thought this business of life was all over,—and willed me to live. . . . I couldn't go on dying, after that, without being rude to you!"

"I am glad you have such good manners," Ann ventured shakily.

"If it wasn't for you, I'd be in a long pine box by this time, and my good brother Willy would be ordering mourning with a silver lining. . . . Well, you willed me to live,—and I don't even know your name!"

"Ann Byrne."

"Ann. . . . It's rather sweet. . . . Well, Ann, what are you going to do about me?"

Ann hesitated. She looked deliberately up and down the ward, gray white and dreary in the light that came through rain-lashed windows. The patients were many of them asleep, in postures of uncouth abandonment: there a man with a week's old beard snored with startling fitfulness, and here a giant from the Far West alternately cursed and blessed the attendant who changed his dressings. More keenly than ever before during her two years of service, she realized that illness is not attractive. Her glance dropped to Densley Howard, and their eyes met. He held her for a breathless moment; she could not have looked away if she would. "I wish," she said unsteadily, "that I could take you away from this horrid place."

"I wish you might. It's beautiful of you to think of anything so delightful." Densley's eyes and lips were transfigured by the sweetness of his smile, and for a moment neither of them spoke. "We'll just have to make the best of it here," he declared at length. "Will you spend hours,—every day,—talking to me?"

Ann nodded, breathless at the thought.

"If I can only manage not to bore you!"

He managed this with ease. Interested Ann might be, startled at his fitful tendernesses, or piqued at his sudden indifferences, but bored—never. At first, when his weakness was pathetically apparent, she bullied him shamelessly, and he submitted with a touch-

ing docility. His nurse little suspected that his obliging appetite was due to the fact that Ann had threatened not to sit with him unless he ate what they brought him; he doggedly consumed fresh eggs and warm milk, and his reward was a dozen fleeting interviews during the day. Ann made a prodigious number of excuses for passing his bed, and pausing. They discussed the most commonplace things, but Howard managed to give a new significance to them.

"The sun is out bright, isn't it?" he said one shining morning after a rain. "I suppose those red brick houses in the Square are soft and pink as a foreign plaster. They always had a fine texture." They had, Ann observed on her way home that night, but she had never noticed it before. She paused for a moment in front of Densley's house, closed since the death of his father, years before, and she nodded and smiled at the old nurse-caretaker, in an upper window. She knew all about her, and her old-time affection for Densley, for as she sat beside his bed they talked sometimes of his boyhood, and even revived her scanty memories of Milton Center, and her unimportant childhood there.

"I don't remember much about it," she confessed. "There was Mrs. Allen, of course,—and there was a boy named Peter. . . . He kissed me once."

Densley lifted a startled face. "The dickens he did!" he exclaimed, and his eyes met hers intently. "How did he happen to do that?"

"I don't know," Ann said demurely. "I don't seem

to remember much of anything else about him. . . . I know there was arbutus in the woods at this time of the year, though,—and checker berries, too."

"I think," Howard commented dryly, "that I am more interested in the fauna than the flora." It was true however; her richer later life had wiped out the recollection of her simple early experiences.

Densley Howard had not been in the hospital many days when Ann began to be miserably aware of the possible comment on her devotion to him. She caught herself wondering if the men in the neighboring cots were gossiping about it, and now and then she raised her voice in order that they might realize how innocuous their conversation was. She suspected the busy nurses of undue interest, and, such was the state of self-consciousness her sense of guilt plunged her into, she kept a wary eye on the door in anticipation of a visit of inspection from Mrs. William. Every morning and night she looked with increasing interest at Densley's empty house, two doors away down the Square. A delightful plan half formulated itself in her bright head, and she wished that her guardian were at home, so that she might discuss it with him; but the president had sent for him, and he was in Washington, sitting in daily conferences on the strained relationship between the United States and England. The girl was, for the time being, her own mistress.

She did not mention her misgivings to Howard, for so complete was her respect for his sophistication that she feared he might think her ridiculous. Somehow

she felt that he was above the gossip of his associates, —or possibly inured to it. . . . Instead, she told him that she had seen his old nurse, and that once she had gone in through the creaking front door to tell her that "Mr. Densley" was better.

"You are better, you know," she added happily.

Howard shrugged one thin shoulder under the blankets. "I have a reprieve," he said lightly.

"Maggie is sure that if you would only go home you would get well at once," she ventured.

"Home? You mean to Washington Square? Back to the house I was born in? That would be—complete."

"Of course," Ann said indifferently, "you would be —my neighbor."

Howard caught her glance, and held it: she had never known anything like the breathless intimacy of his look. When he spoke his voice was dreamily reminiscent. "Ever since I went abroad to live," he said, "I have wandered about, looking for the most beautiful thing in the world,—just then,—and when I thought I had found it, I always settled down to live near it. . . . I should like to live near you."

"You might be lonely there." Ann's look skilfully included the harassing nearness of his fellow-patients.

"Do you mean that you wouldn't come to see me?"

Ann hesitated. The fright in his voice was too delicious to soothe immediately. "I shouldn't be allowed to," she said demurely.

"Mr. Cortlandt?"

"He might let me come,—but he is in Washington. . . . He won't be at home again for two weeks."

"Two weeks! It will be all over for me before that! . . . But it would be a good finish. . . . You could confess when he comes home,—confessions are good for the souls of guardians, too."

"Do you mean—that you—are going—to die?"

Howard nodded. "A campaign and Libby weren't just the best things in the world for a constitution like mine, I imagine. . . . My mother died of lung fever, too. . . . She was years younger than I. . . . But we won't talk about it."

"No," cried Ann, "and we won't think of it! You shall get well!"

Howard's tender gaze quieted her. "I'll get out of this place, at any rate," he said, throwing all the energy he had into his voice, "and you shall do your best to make my ugly house cheerful. I'll give you *carte blanche,*—you shall spend a fortune in paint and flowers,—we'll show Willy money can fly, before he gets it all! Will you, Ann?" He stretched out his hand, and clasped her nervous fingers. "Will you?"

Her eyes widened eagerly. "Oh, I should just love to!" she said childishly.

"And you will come to see me,—every day? For hours?"

The girl smiled down at him; her expression was suddenly mature,—almost maternal. "Of course I will," she said.

Densley's face lighted like a boy's. "I knew you had a capacity for rebellion!" he said gaily, and Ann was immediately thankful for the luckless trait of her refractory girlhood. It was not an entirely simple decision for her to have made, as Densley seemed so easily to assume: she foresaw a family condemnation more severe than any she had yet evoked, when it should become known that she was making daily visits to Densley Howard, once the scapegoat of Washington Square!

"Tell me," he questioned, "don't you rather enjoy feeling wicked?"

She swallowed her qualms, and nodded. "I am afraid I do!" she confessed.

It was Ann who consulted the doctor about the move, and to her consternation he confirmed Densley's hopeless prediction. "I doubt if it would hurt him to go," he said. "Of course he understands that he may die any day,—or possibly live for a month or six weeks. . . . If he wants to go home I think he may,—and we can always use his cot here."

The girl hesitated no longer; if Howard had only a few weeks to live, she determined to make them as much to his liking as she could.

He told her what he wanted done to the house: it seemed to Ann clear madness to remove the rich imitation red velvet paper from the walls of the dignified front room where old Mr. Howard had set up his black walnut bedroom set, and lived and died in airless luxury; but in the face of Densley Howard's desire to

reproduce, as nearly as possible, some clearly ugly foreign setting, she obeyed directions, and swallowed her objections. After all, she said to herself, with a sense of justice that often obtruded itself on her judgments, she didn't have to live there! So the paper was sacrificed, and the walls were whitewashed. The heavy early Victorian furniture was exiled to the attic, and in its place she put pieces from the mysterious packing boxes Densley had sent back when he first went to Europe, before he had abandoned the idea of some day making Washington Square his home. The cracked unvarnished bureaus, and the queer carved bed put together with wooden pins, seemed to the girl fit only for a bonfire. However, Howard not only gave her explicit directions, but, in the face of her bewilderment,drew her curiously finished little sketches of the things he wished about him; in the end he made her a plan of the room, showing the location of everything; there was no excuse for any mistake on her part. It seemed an extraordinary thing to the girl that a man should be so concerned about mere furnishings, and she thought that Howard must be a vastly less dangerous character than she had believed.

His last request before he left the hospital, the royal command to fill the place with flowers, was more sensible, she thought, although her eyes widened at his careless, "Be sure to have enough,—dozens, with long stems,—not little set bouquets, as though you were going to carry them to a ball." She took over an armful of hothouse roses. which glowed sweetly

in the cool white room, and stuck a branch of flowering crab in the bay-window, where the afternoon sun would wake it to a translucent glow. She glanced about her with a sudden vivid pleasure: in spite of herself, she had accomplished a beautiful thing, and some instinct deeper than her meager experience bade her recognize it.

CHAPTER XVI

DENSLEY HOWARD [Continued]

WHEN Densley Howard was finally established in Washington Square, the importance of her hospital service suddenly dwindled for Ann. She reported, as usual, early each morning, and her associates did not dream with what a divided mind she attended to her duties: they only knew that she instituted a new custom of taking half her day off, which seemed excusable, in the riotous April weather.

The long afternoons, empty as a perfect gilded bowl, were her own, to do with as she pleased, and she poured into them the richness of association with Densley. He lat flat in his Italian walnut bed, his thin face gray and ascetic, against the white pillows, and his gay voice so weak that if she did not sit near him, Ann could not hear what he said to her. He looked alarmingly ill, and yet, once the shock of seeing him, —the daily realization of this fact,—was over, there was nothing to suggest it to his visitor: he did not think of it himself apparently, for the eyes that sought Ann's so persistently were full only of a consciousness of her. . . . He never talked of his symptoms nor allowed her to burden him with inquiries as to his condition. He settled that on the first day.

"Some one of these days," he said, "I shall just die—quite quietly. . . . There is no one to care,

particularly. . . . And now,—let us never speak of it again. . . . That is settled."

Instead they talked of many delightful things, unimportant in themselves, but curiously intimate, in the isolated companionship of the bare white room. Densley reviewed his life abroad, and discovered a wealth of beauty to the untutored girl. He told her of the mountain slopes of Taormina in the springtime, where the shepherd's pipe rose sweet and shrill on the evening breeze; of Venice, which he said was the most magnificent stage setting for happiness in the world; of the Roman Campagna, where the distant mountains swam always in a golden mist, and of Paris, when the horse chestnuts bloomed over the paths where the lovely Empress Eugenie walked. It was all magic to Ann, and it was no wonder that the long spring afternoons seemed all too short.

"How you feel things!" Densley murmured, his eyes on her glowing face, "and how I should like to have ten years,—ten golden years,—to show you the world in, my dear!"

"Oh," Ann responded, "the world is so big! Ten years isn't half enough!"

"Well," murmured Howard. "We have the entire past, at any rate,—and the present;—no one can cheat me of that."

They talked, too, of other things which Densley assured her she should love, once she came to know them, and under his persuasive enthusiasm she gladly agreed with him.

"Ever heard of Wagner operas?" he asked, early in their intimacy, adding, as she shook her head. "And these Cortlandts think they are cultivated people!"

"They are!" Ann protested indignantly. "Uncle often takes me to hear opera."

"What opera? *L'Elisir d'Amore? Ernani? La Traviata?* My dear girl, if that is all, you don't know what opera is. . . . You should hear *Lohengrin!*" He began to whistle a phrase of the Swan song, but broke off at once, for lack of breath.

"If I had a piano here," he complained, "and could sit up to it for a few moments, I could show you something. When I play *Der Fliegende Hollander* I can give even myself a thrill,—and that's the test!"

He had an amazing proficiency in all the arts. He drew delightful little sketches, illustrative of passing impressions, and he talked bewilderingly about painting. He scorned the sentimental canvasses that Ann unquestioningly admired, and upheld strange gods of whom she had never heard. He praised an unknown called Manet, and, after some search in curiously haphazard luggage, he produced a small painting of a Spanish dancer. "Manet did it," he said, reverently, "last year, when I ran across him with Baudelaire, in Paris."

It seemed to the girl garishly bare and unshadowed; she thought it was not pretty at all, but she paid Densley's intelligence the tribute of doubting her own taste, and she put it away as he bade her, not, as he

said, to wait until the master should become famous, but because she treasured it as a gift from him.

It was not until the third day of this easy companionship that he asked her the question which she had been dreading. She thought, when she came in, that he looked more ill than usual, and she could not suppress a murmur of pity.

He frowned at her ferociously; the tenderness to which she was accustomed had left his face, and the warm certainty of his liking was all gone. "I have had a blow," he said.

All at once she knew. "Some one has told you about Hendricks," she answered. She looked across at him appealingly from where she stood, forlorn, by the door.

"Yes," he replied. "The doctor told me. He says you are engaged to him,—to Hendricks Renneslyer."

Ann nodded. "I am."

Howard motioned impatiently to her usual seat. "Come and sit down," he commanded. "Let us get to the bottom of this. . . . It can't be."

"But it is." Her valiant smile was dreary.

"I saw him, at Fairfax Court-House."

"You saw him? You saw Hendricks? You never told me! How did he look?"

"He looked—stupid."

"Oh, that isn't fair! He is a very good officer."

"Yes,—good as the deuce! Roars out his orders at his men so that they shake in their shoes! Frowns

like a regular Zeus if anything crosses him. . . . But, Ann,—you must believe me,—he would never know why life is fair." The tenderness had come back into his eyes, as for a profound moment they held hers.

"But,—is life fair?" she asked confusedly. "There seems to me to be so much pain,—so much unhappiness."

"My dear, it is,—because you are here, and some day some glorified man will make you see it,—but not Hendricks Renneslyer. You must promise me, not Hendricks Renneslyer."

"But why? Hendricks is—good. He is,—uncle says so,—safe."

"Good? Do you want to marry a man who is good because he hasn't enough imagination to be capable of temptation? Safe? Good God, Ann, if you must marry a man as unsympathetic as Renneslyer, you don't want him too safe,—you'll never get rid of him!"

"But,—he is very fond of me."

"Is he? How extraordinary! I am fond of you myself, my dear, although it never seems to occur to you. . . . I am mad about you. . . . I think about you constantly. . . . With so little time left I begrudge the few hours I sleep, and long before there is a chance of your coming I stand Maggie in the window there, to watch for you."

"Ah," said Ann wisely, "that is because you are ill, and see no one but me."

Densley Howard looked steadily at her for a long moment. "No," he said, "it is because I love you. . . . I love you. . . . Strange, isn't it,—at the end, like this?"

Ann sat speechless, but he talked on, with his usual sunny fluency. "I've been in love before, of course, but it seems as if this time was more—important. . . . Still, you never can tell. Each time it is different, and each time the present transcends the past. . . . And yet, I think, with you, that I might not have tired. . . . I could have made you gloriously happy for a while. . . . It seems a pity, doesn't it, when we believe that being happy is what counts?"

Ann started. "Is it, I wonder?"

Howard lifted himself higher on his pillows. "My dear, it is! To be happy,—to be free,—that's life!"

"Uncle says that doing your duty,—taking your place in the community,—is the important thing."

Howard laughed. "Your place in the community is a cold comfort! Fill your life full, Ann,—full to overflowing,—and then at any rate you will know that you haven't missed anything! Look at my life! I used to think that I was a moral to point a tale, and yet, if I hadn't done just what I have, if I didn't lie here dying because I have flung away my strength, —why, then I might never have known you. . . . I should have missed these exquisite moments, Ann. . . . Give me your hand to kiss, dear, I forget what I was going to say."

Ann stretched out her hand unquestioningly: Densley always kissed it when she came and when she went, but this was different; although he only pressed his lips once on the back of her hand, and again, lingeringly, on her cupped palm, she felt that no kiss had ever been so intimately caressing. His face was flushed when he let her draw her fingers away; he had a fictitious look of health and vigor. "You are not made for duty, Ann," he said. "You are made for joy."

She gladly flung herself upon the safe ground of argument. "Hendricks expects me to be happy, of course."

"But will you be? That is the question. Will you be satisfied to let his standards govern your actions? Wouldn't you want, ever, to talk to some one about the things Renneslyer can't understand? Wouldn't you ever have a feeling that you were so hedged in by laws that you must break out just for the fun of breaking? Wouldn't you ever want to live fully?"

"I—don't know," Ann murmured breathlessly. "I am afraid I should."

"Of course you can't marry him! I know you, my dear. . . . I suppose there will be the devil of a row if you break with him?"

"Oh, yes," Ann admitted, and laughed.

"And you are dependent on all these Cortlandts. . . . Listen to me, Ann, darling,—marry me, and cheat my smug-faced clergyman brother!"

Ann moved her chair hastily back, and cast a fright-

ened glance at the door. She shook her head violently. "I couldn't do that!" she protested decidedly.

"But why not? You don't need to love me, you know. It would be very simple. . . . We'll just have a minister in here some afternoon, and then, when I am gone, you will come in for something that will enable you to snap your fingers at the Cortlandts."

"But I don't want to snap my fingers at them," she protested. "I adore my uncle. . . . He is the only person I have ever been perfectly honest with,—except you."

"And do you adore me,—a little?" His tone was light, but his eyes were suddenly tragically intense.

She looked straight at him, with a troubled gaze. "I don't know," she said, "but I think I could, easily."

Densley put out his hand, and held hers for a moment, in a close dry clasp. She had not known that he had so much strength left as she felt in his clinging fingers. "That's all," he said weakly, as, after a moment, his hold relaxed, and she drew her hand away.

After that he read poetry to her, when their conversation flagged. Ann wondered if he, too, were afraid of their silences. In spite of his labored breathing he got through a vast amount of Keats and Shelley, and he let her read him Tennyson, while he lay exhausted, with his eyes fixed on her. She had never voiced such sentiments before, even Tennyson's demulcent Victorian passion seemed to her unrestrained, and when she listened to Densley's voice,

thrillingly emotional, in spite of its weakness, the fragmentary love-making of the temperate Hendricks seemed like the make-believe of a child. She told Densley that she would break with him, and so she made up her mind at last, with a vivifying sense of relief.

"Why," she said one day, "did you come over here? Was it just to set me free? You don't talk as if America meant much to you. Why did you want to fight?"

"I didn't," he confessed easily. "I hated it like the devil. . . . I remember the day I decided. I was loafing along the Arno, thinking how fortunate it was for me to be there,—free,—with no ties to draw me into this miserable business,—when all at once it came over me that the war was being fought for freedom. . . . I had had that on my flag from the beginning,—since I first rebelled, almost a boy, here in New York. . . . And so I came back. . . . And it has been too much for me. I expect it is the only thing I ever did that was like my clergyman brother."

As the days went on, Ann became nervously anxious about her guardian's return; she was afraid he would not approve of her intimacy with Densley, and she felt that she could not give it up. The day before his arrival Howard detained her with a score of trivial subterfuges: he looked very ill indeed, when she shut out the last of the sunset, and lighted the candles on the mantel-shelf.

"Come here," he said finally. "Come closer."

Ann obeyed, and slipped her hand in his, with an affectionate little pressure. She looked down at him miserably, realizing his tragic state, and then she smiled, to hearten him.

"That's right," he murmured. "There's sadness enough, Ann darling. . . . Good night."

The girl hesitated. There was something in his eyes that troubled her, and made her stoop swiftly to him, and kiss him, very shyly, on his wasted cheek.

He did not try to detain her, nor to return her caress. "Thank you," he said. "You have given me something to think about. . . . Thank you,—for everything."

She hated to leave him, lying alone there in the big room, with the flickering candles making scythe-like shadows across the high walls, especially as she did not know when she might return, if her guardian should prove obdurate. Her heart was heavy as she slipped out of the silent house.

Immediately after Mr. Cortlandt's arrival, early the next morning, she told him of her escapade, and she was surprised at his calm reception of her news. He seemed more sad than angry, and he was very gentle with her. As she poured out her confession, he took both her hands and held them.

"You are not displeased with me, uncle?"

"Displeased? No. . . . If you gave him any happiness,—poor boy. . . . Densley Howard died in the night, Ann."

CHAPTER XVII

TRAGEDY

ANN could not tell how much her guardian surmised of her feeling for Densley, but she knew it was for her sake that he, in the absence of any one in authority, took charge of his neighbor's house, with its sinister knot of crape on the silver knocker. It was he who notified the inheriting brother in Detroit, and who made the arrangements for the funeral, although he left it to her to see that the house was ready for the services. She set gratefully to work to put in order the stuffy formal rooms on the first floor, whose closed white doors had so often thrown back her slender black shadow, as she hurried past them to the stairs.

Only once did she venture into the dear familiarity of the upper front room; the blinds had been closed, and a thin gray light pervaded the spacious white place. A tight bunch of pallid funeral roses stood on the table by the bed, and a thick odor of more exotic flowers hung in the air; the old nurse was having her way at the end. Densley lay as she had seen him last, except that the eager blue eyes, which had always followed her persistently, were closed; it was strange not to meet their shining response. . . . His hands were folded on his breast; they were pitiably

thin, but they were poignantly natural. . . . She put out her own hand to touch them, but shrank back from their cold unresponse. . . . He looked sad, she thought, and older. Now that he had nothing to give her he was subtly changed. He had loved her very beautifully, she knew, but it seemed a curiously long time ago, and she wondered, as she stood, glowing, above him, if she had really loved him. . . . What was love, she questioned piteously, her eyes fixed on that graven face as on an oracle. Was it a response only, something other love called into being, like a speech in a play, or was it a more vital thing than that, a thing that ran out ahead of one, beyond one's defenses? She could not tell, nor could Densley Howard now enlighten her.

One thing, however, she did know, and that was that she must break immediately with Hendricks Renneslyer. She went straight to her own room, after this mute farewell, and, sitting sternly upright before her little desk, she wrote her letter to him. The problem of how she should tell him that she found their engagement to be a mistake had occupied her thoughts for many wakeful nights, but now the difficulties seemed smoothed away, while the feeling that she was doing something Densley would approve of gave her a consciousness of exaltation.

"And so, dear Hendricks," she finished, "I can not marry you, because I know, now, that I do not love you, and no one could be sorrier than I am about it."

The specter of her guardian's disappointment stalked in vain before her determination; she sent her letter to the mail and would have told Mr. Cortlandt all about it when he came in, had he not forestalled her with astonishing news of his own.

"Ann," he said, immediately on his arrival, "I have heard from the president. He wants me to go abroad at once,—to England. The *Great Eastern* sails the day after to-morrow; I shall take it."

"Uncle," cried Ann, her personal difficulties forgotten, "may I go with you?"

"I am afraid not, Ann. I considered it, but I am going with other gentlemen, and in London we are to join Mr. John M. Forbes of Boston."

"Mr. Lincoln is sending you to keep those English shipbuilders from letting the Rebels have their iron ships!" Ann guessed acutely. "I am so glad, uncle! I know you will never let them do it."

Mr. Cortlandt smiled affectionately at her. "My dear, I am flattered at your belief in my powers,—but Mr. Forbes has that matter very well in hand; I am only to confer with him informally about it. . . What the president really wants me to do is to go first to England and then to France and Germany, to acquaint European capitalists with the actual circumstances in this country, and with the resources of the North. He believes it is only in this way that we can destroy their partiality for the Confederates. I don't want to go, Ann. I should prefer to work here. There is more bad news from the front."

Ann's frightened eyes interrogated him. "Chancellorsville?" she whispered, unwilling to voice the possibility of loss at that important point.

"Yes. . . . Another defeat."

"But I thought we had twice as many men there as the Rebels?"

"Lee is a great general, Ann, and the sooner we Federals realize it the better. . . . They say the loss of life is appalling;—perhaps twenty-five thousand men killed, and many more wounded."

Into Ann's mind rushed a realization of Hendricks in deadly peril. After all, until they were reassured of his safety in this present terrible battle, she would not tell her guardian what she had written; she would spare him that much. So she flung herself into Mr. Cortlandt's preparations for departure, and held her peace. She was glad to be busy, and to have little opportunity to think of Densley, who lay surrounded by alien kinsfolk, in the house just along the Square. She sat up very late that evening, as her guardian allowed her to remain beside him in the informal conference in the library. Mr. Greeley was there, and Mr. Dana, who brought the heartening news that the redoubtable Stonewall Jackson had fallen that day. They smoked a great many cigars, and discussed her guardian's mission at length. Ann was enormously proud of him; as she sat mutely witnessing his friends' trust in him she found it easy to share their belief that he was the only man to save the situation abroad.

As she took down her hair that night, and brushed

it for a long time in order to rid it of the odor of tobacco which clung to it, her personal difficulties seemed very trivial indeed. . . . Possibilities of war with England. . . . Foreign loans. . . . The friendship of France. . . . Somehow the question of whether she should marry Hendricks or not was extremely unimportant. . . . Suddenly, however, she wished very much that she could tell Densley of her uncle's mission, and talk it over with him. . . . She was tired and it was late, but it was a long time before she could sleep. High clouds were scurrying about a moonlit sky, and she was afraid that it might rain the next day,—the day of Densley's funeral.

In the morning, however, the sun shone brilliantly; the same high clouds moved majestically about a far-away blue sky, and the breeze, even in the city, was laden with the odor of fruit-trees in bloom. It was the sort of day that Densley would have loved, and Ann was sorry that he had not lived to see it. After all, she thought, it would have been better for him to be buried on the kind of rainy day he hated.

Her guardian went with her to the services in his neighbor's house, but he could not take the time to drive out to the cemetery, so Ann went alone, and stood on the fringe of the small group of mourners. She felt that the ceremony had strangely little to do with Densley, who had talked so much of the joy of life, and so little of this numbing sadness. She wondered at herself for not feeling a more acute grief;

she clenched her hands until the nails bit into her soft palms, and still she could not force herself to an emotional crisis. . . . She thought, "I shall never see him again. . . . I shall never see him again," —and at the same time she could not help wondering what would have been the situation had she accepted Densley's mad suggestion to have a clergyman in, on one of those uneventful afternoons. Her lips twitched as she glanced at "the good Willy" in his correct mourning, and wondered if he would have exhibited quite so much conventional grief had she been beside him,—Densley's widow. . . . The dull thud of earth falling on wood aroused her to sudden poignant emotion; she had never felt like that in all her life before. She wished that she were the sort of girl who cried easily; it would be better than this sensation of all the world falling away from her. . . . Floods of tears, she felt, would be inadequate, and she hated herself because she stood, still and composed, with her white lips closely set.

In Washington Square a great confusion awaited her; everything was in a whirl of excitement; even old Joseph, who opened the door for her, was tremulous with agitation, and Mrs. Renneslyer's voice, breathless and shrill, came clearly out to her, from the the drawing-room. She was there, elegantly emotional upon a sofa, while Fanny was wiping her eyes beside her, and Hendricks' father was striding about the room, red-faced and incoherently profane. Mr. Cortlandt was standing, very still, in the window.

There was something ominous in the air, and Ann halted abruptly. "It is Hendricks!" she cried. "He is dead!"

Mr. Renneslyer reassured her. "Dead? Nonsense!" he burst out. "Hendricks is a hero,—that's all,—a regular hero! Damme, no one would have thought it when he was a boy! I have had a letter from his colonel: Hendricks distinguished himself in a night attack—conspicuous bravery, he says. They've made him a captain,—at twenty-two, by God!"

There was an instant's silence after this outburst as Mr. Cortlandt came over to Ann, and took her hand. She was glad that he stood so as to shield her face from the others.

"You must be very proud, my dear," he said ceremoniously. "We must all be proud of Hendricks."

The girl sank into a chair, dazed by the sudden reaction. Into her mind came, unbidden, Densley Howard's casual depreciation of Hendricks in action; she had an instant's clear vision of him, red-faced and domineering. . . . But her guardian was right, just now, for a while, she must be proud; she should have no place for any other emotion. . . . She put her hands to her face, to insure some privacy from unfriendly eyes, and then over everything came flooding gladness that Hendricks was not killed,—dear Hendricks, whom she found it impossible to be in love with!

There came a great jangle at the door-bell, and every one, already in an emotional state, started nerv-

ously. Joseph brought in a note, and Mr. Cortlandt ripped it open. "It is from Horace Greeley," he said. "It is marked 'Important.'" He glanced at the brief enclosure, and turned suddenly white.

"What is it?" Ann whispered.

Mr. Cortlandt did not seem to hear her; he might have been alone in the room for any attention he paid to the people gathered there. He reread the note aloud, stupidly, as if he had not mastered its contents.

"Dear Friend: It is my sad duty to inform you that in the official list, sent me for publication, of men who have gloriously fallen at the battle of Chancellorsville, the name of your nephew Hendricks Renneslyer appears. I can say nothing to soften your grief,—nothing to . . ." His voice trailed off into silence, as Mrs. Renneslyer interrupted his reading with a loud scream, and Joseph burst into lamentations. The room was suddenly filled with a clamor of sorrow. Ann stood very still, half stunned by the shock. She looked over at her guardian, and saw his face become old and gray under her eyes. She went over to him, and put her arms around his neck; she was trembling violently, and Mr. Cortlandt slipped his arm about her, and drew her close to him.

"Poor child," he whispered. "Poor child."

The girl's convulsive clinging suddenly went slack. Behind her Mrs. Renneslyer's shrill grief arose, and Fanny's outburst of sobs, but she disregarded them. Standing there with her cheek against her guardian's,

she thought with the most extraordinary clarity. The question of whether or not she should marry Hendricks, which had for so long tormented her, was, miraculously, gone, and in its place a conviction arose that here was something important she could do for the kind old man she adored,—for whom she felt that she could never do enough. For his sake, she could pretend that she had loved Hendricks as well as he undoubtedly had deserved,—as well as all these people wanted to believe she had loved him. It seemed at the moment not too difficult to carry off, because she was, after all, as sorry to lose Hendricks as she would have been had he been a well loved brother. Standing with her face hidden, she could feel that her guardian, and all of them, even Mrs. Renneslyer, assumed that of all the grief-stricken persons in the room, she was the one most concerned. She accepted this position willingly, and the moment passed in which she could have confessed the real situation between herself and Hendricks.

CHAPTER XVIII

ACTION

THE *Great Eastern* sailed the day after the receipt of the news of Hendricks' death, and Ann dogged Mr. Cortlandt's footsteps during this interval. She drove about the city with him while he put his affairs in order, waiting patiently outside office buildings and banks, and he talked to her in snatches of Hendricks.

Everywhere people stopped to offer him condolences, for Hendricks' name among the dead had given the family the sympathy of the entire city. Ann hated this public display of grief, and when she said good-by to her guardian on the dock, she wished that she might sail with him, away from it all. There were tears in his eyes when he kissed her, and his hands on her shoulder clung regretfully. The girl was frankly crying as she urged him to take good care of himself,—to come back quickly. She remembered the time years ago when she had said farewell to her pretty mother before she had sailed, and she shivered in unreasonable dread of a tragic happening on this voyage, also.

"I should have gone with you," she kept repeating futilely. "I should have gone with you."

Harsh gongs began to sound; her guardian embraced his sisters and Fanny, and turned to her for a last pressure of her hands and a deep look into her

eyes. "God bless you," he said, and he kissed her again before he hurried off, up the gangplank. Almost immediately the ship began to move, and there was a great confusion of getting under way. Farewells were lost in the creaking of ropes and blowing of whistles. Ann looked up and saw Mr. Cortlandt leaning over the rail on the upper deck, waving down to her. She stood very still, and waved back,—a solid black figure, and a little wisp of fluttering white. . . . It seemed to her but a moment when the figures on board the *Great Eastern* became indefinite, and merged into the general bulk of the ship. . . . There was nothing for her to do but return to Washington Square.

There Ann found herself facing new obligations. Mrs. Cortlandt and her daughter came to live with her while her guardian was away, and Fanny talked of Hendricks by the hour. Ann had a curious sensation of being pushed into passionate affirmation, because the other girl seemed wistfully to demand it. Mrs. Cortlandt proved herself an authority on the etiquette of grief, and Ann submitted willingly enough to her dictum that she should submerge her vivid youth in crape and veils, for this was a part of her obligation to the Cortlandt family which she willingly assumed. Fanny's mother, however, did not stop at that. There was little gaiety in New York in the spring of 1863, but she gave the girls to understand that had there been, they could not have taken part in it. She talked a great deal of the balls and dinner

parties which they might be foregoing, had Hendricks' death occurred in normal times. This was harmless enough, although singularly irritating; the girl learned to present a docile face to such fruitless conversation, but when Mrs. Cortlandt announced that she considered it improper for her to go on with her service at the hospital, as though nothing had happened, Ann rebelled. Three days after Hendricks' death she was back at her post, but the discussion in regard to her work arose at every meal, insistent and acrimonious. It seemed to her that she could never get away from it.

Moreover, she had none of the delightful privacy she had enjoyed when living with her guardian: it seemed to her that she had no opportunity to be alone. Hendricks' mother made constant demands on her, and Ann was so sorry for her that she listened attentively, with more than the docility of a daughter, to details of Hendricks' youth,—details curiously unimportant, like those a stranger might have repeated. She was told again and again of his little best suits, and his lordly air when a child, which, after all, she could herself remember. Mrs. Renneslyer suddenly looked her age; her pretty face sharpened, and she lost her alert carriage. Ann was glad enough to do anything she could for her; the thing she found hardest to endure was her shame in the face of such genuine grief; she preferred the acrimony of Mrs. Cortlandt to the new softness of Hendricks' mother, or Fanny's broken sweetness. Her spirit was willing, but her nerves were feminine, and they all assumed her devo-

tion to the slain hero so unquestioningly, that there were moments when she longed to cry out wildly to them that she had not loved him. She felt that if she might do this she would develop a more genuine sorrow for his death. As it was, an unconquerable feeling of resentment toward him edged its way into her dutiful grief; she was horrified at it but she could not help it. She did her best to be honest; she tried to keep her mind on the triumphant Hendricks of the early days of their betrothal, and she sternly banished Densley Howard from her thoughts. That poignantly intimate interlude sank into unreality; it was as though it had never been, except that somewhere in Ann's heart there was a little door kept firmly shut upon a smiling world which he had discovered for her.

In the meantime, the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia marched triumphantly across Maryland, and into Pennsylvania, and the North awoke to a shock of real fright. The Army of the Potomac, although weakened by losses and dissensions, advanced pluckily to meet the invading enemy, but New York was crowded with refugees from Baltimore and Harrisburg who spread the fear that Washington might be taken. Continual engagements made the hospital situation acute. Emergency tents near the front were filled to capacity and Washington had become a city of the sick, but still there was not a sufficient number of beds, and in order to relieve the congestion, the wounded were sent on to New York

in great numbers. Additional quarters were hastily made ready for them, but in spite of that, the wards were overcrowded, and still strings of four-horse ambulances might be seen, day and night, on the streets leading from the docks to the hospitals.

Ann made a new acquaintance who had just returned from field hospital work in Virginia; after her experiences there, she found New York nursing tame, and said so. The girl drank in her reminiscenes eagerly, and immediately developed an ambition to nurse at the front herself. She returned to her early habit of day-dreams; she imagined herself in heroic situations, staunching wounds under actual fire. . . . Staying Casabianca-like by a patient's bedside, while the Rebels took the hospital. . . . Saving the life of the commanding general himself. . . . She grew extremely restless, and under her acute desire for change, her difficult daily life became all but unbearable.

She was peddling lemonade through the wards late one afternoon, when the doctor in charge, an old friend who had seen her through the various ailments of childhood, came up to her and took her heavy pitcher away.

"I have something to tell you," he said. "Come outside for a moment."

He led the way to the high steps of the building, where they might overlook the little square courtyard filled with the white tents of convalescents. With June not yet gone, it was already arid with the city's

heat, and noisome with the odor of gangrene attendant upon hospitals before the days of antiseptics. The doctor looked narrowly at Ann's white face and dark circled eyes. She had a flagellated look, he thought, and wondered why.

"I wonder if you can stand a shock?" he questioned.

Ann turned frightened eyes upon him. "Not uncle?" she gasped, with a sinking memory of the tragedy, years ago, of the *Arctic*.

Doctor Small shook his head. "This is good news," he said, "or, at least, a chance of it. You know that lad who was brought in yesterday? The leg amputation case?"

"The one who died in the night?"

"Yes. He talked to me before he died. It seems he knew you."

"Knew me?"

"Yes. He was in the Fifty-Fifth. He was, he says, Captain Renneslyer's orderly."

"I wish I had talked to him! He might have told me something about Hendricks."

"He did tell me. He says he saw him, at Winchester."

"At—Winchester? But that was after Chancellorsville!" Ann put both hands on the doctor's arm to steady herself. "Was he—himself? Did he know what he was saying?"

"I think so. But, of course, I can't be sure of it."

"Could they have made such a mistake?"

"The first casualty list of every battle is incorrect. You know that."

"But, Doctor Small, how can we find out?"

"You can telegraph."

"That's useless. We've been telegraphing ever since the message came, trying to get particulars of Hendricks' death."

"Then you can only wait."

"Wait? Doctor Small, I can't wait! If my guardian were at home he would find out, if he had to go down to the Army of the Potomac himself!"

The doctor nodded. "I suppose so, but as he isn't here, we must be patient."

Ann's thoughts were chaotic. . . . If Hendricks lived her guardian would be happy again. . . . . Every one would be happy. . . . She would be happy herself, and she would be freed from her horrible assumption of grief, and of shame for the position in which she found herself. She remembered how old and broken her guardian had looked, there on the dock before he sailed; she had cried looking at him. She felt she must send the good news to him as quickly as possible.

"I must write to my uncle," she said. "I must let him know at once."

Doctor Small put a restraining hand on her arm. "I wouldn't do that," he said gently, "wait until you are sure. You will only make it harder for him if you encourage him to hope, and then disappoint him."

This was good advice and Ann nodded soberly as she received it. She went home at once. It was, she decided, imperative that she find out whether Hen-

dricks lived or not. There must, she thought, be some one who could go to Virginia. As she hurried through the streets she tried to fix her mind on the person, but in vain. She knew enough of conditions near the front to realize that it required intense personal interest to accomplish anything there; it was not an errand which one could intrust to a clerk. . . . Hendricks' father was ill,—he had had a bronchial cough all the late winter, and had finally allowed Mrs. Renneslyer to take him over to Washington for a cure in that more balmy air, with the result that he was miserably laid up there, in the hotel. . . . All the young men she knew were off fighting. . . . It was a pity that she was a girl. . . . She considered, for a moment, putting the matter before Mrs. Cortlandt, and urging her to take the trip, but at once she knew that lady would only echo the doctor's sane judgment that all they could do was to wait. Ann felt that it would be more than she could endure if she was forced to hear that unanswerable statement again. Her tired nerves shrank miserably from the prolonged emotional crisis into which her news would plunge the women of her family. . . . If only she might go herself to look the matter up! She half paused, breathless with desire, at the idea. . . . Once at the front, too, it would be strange if she could not make some connection with a hospital there. . . . She had no conscious plan, yet time seemed curiously precious, and when she reached Washington Square she broke into a run.

At the door Joseph told her that Mrs. Cortlandt and Fanny had responded to a call from the Sanitary Commission ladies, and had gone there to work. "Miss Fanny, she say to tell you to come too, Miss Ann. They's a supper prepared by de ladies, and she say dey need you."

The girl's first sensation was relief at postponing the telling of her news; it would, she thought, give her that much more time to find some one to go to Virginia. . . . There was a train at nine o'clock. . . . Every one away, like this. . . . It was providential.

"I can't go, Joseph," she amazed herself by saying. "I am leaving to-night,—for Philadelphia."

"Philadelphia, Miss Ann? Where de Rebels is?"

"Perhaps Mr. Hendricks isn't dead, Joseph. I have to go to find out."

There was a great flurry of exclamation and excitement, while Ann ate her supper, and packed a small traveling bag. It never occurred to any of the servants that it was an unusual thing for her to do, to go off into the night by herself, and the girl's confidence grew as she realized that fact. Perhaps, she thought, even Mrs. Cortlandt would not think it too hopelessly strange.

Old Joseph insisted on accompanying her to the ferry, and in the carriage he began to have a change of heart. "It don't seem right to me, Miss Ann,—you going off all by you'self, dis-a-way," he protested from time to time, unavailingly, and at the last mo-

ment, when he had carried her bag on board the ferry-boat, he refused to leave her. "It's getting too dark, Miss Ann, honey, f'r you to be on de water by you'self. I'll see you on to de train." Ann was touched in spite of herself, and was glad to have him with her, too, as the water was very black away from the dock, and almost all the passengers were men, who stared at her persistently. She would not have admitted that she was nervous, but she was grateful to the old negro.

He found a seat for her in the crowded car, and stood beside her, bareheaded, as long as he could, fencing off any one who might have wished to share her seat, and talking of Hendricks when he was a little boy. People looked curiously at the elegant young woman attended by her deferential old servant, but neither Joseph nor his mistress noticed them. "Good luck, Miss Ann," he said, as the conductor shouted "All aboard." "De Lord be with you, an' Mr. Hendricks."

All night long there were delays and rumors of trouble. Twice they were side-tracked for a train of cavalry,—cars filled with shouting men and stamping horses,—and once for a load of lowing beef cattle, en route for the Army of the Potomac. Ann could not sleep. After her fellow-passengers had settled themselves into strange grotesques of repose, while the candles in the spring sockets guttered dimly, she sat looking at the full canals of New Jersey, placid and unreal, in the dim light of a waning moon. . . . She knew that she had involved herself in a fine

mess, running off in this way. . . . If her guardian had been at home, of course it wouldn't have been necessary. . . . Her acquaintance at the hospital had talked of assisting at emergency operations; that was better than writing notes, and reading aloud, under Mrs. William's eagle eye. . . . Adventure,—that was it! . . . Surely, once Hendricks was found, she could manage to get into a field hospital, if only for a few days. . . . He must be alive,—she was sure of it. . . . How overjoyed her guardian would be,—and Hendricks' mother, who could lay aside the black which made her look so pathetically old. . . . She wondered if Hendricks had her note yet. . . . She smiled reluctantly at the ridiculous figure she would cut, in her weeds, should he actually face her with it. . . . She was wide awake when the dawn came; for a long time the blank sky was faintly streaked with mauve, then all at once the whole east burst dramatically into rose color, the sun soared up with a rush of light and movement, and the trees in the fields beside the track flung long black shadows after the escaping train. Ann watched the transformation eagerly. She was not sleepy, and she wondered if Hendricks were miraculously awakening to welcome this new day.

Philadelphia was a vastly different place from the staid town she had known before, when visiting there with her guardian. People thronged the streets, as though it were a holiday, and bands playing martial music promenaded through the crowd, followed by

huge canvas signs on which were printed the names of the various regiments which men might join; it was an enormous advertising campaign in the interest of enlistment. The "Coal Men's Regiment," and the "Union League Brigade" were especially active; it seemed to Ann that their banners hung from every house; that every boarding detailed the advantages they offered. Before the recruiting office at Twelfth and Girard Streets, there was such a dense throng of men eager to enlist that she found some difficulty in proceeding on her way to the Sanitary Commission rooms. The building was placarded with signs: "The Washington Grays," "Woodward's Light Battery," "Fall In, Men," and an appeal to negro citizens, "Men of Color,—come forward." It was like the early days of the war, in New York, only here there was an added tensity because of the nearness of the enemy. All the while, over the hoarse tumult of the crowd, the shrill voices of newsboys could be heard calling: "Confederate Cavalry approaches Harrisburg!" And in inarticulate answer Ann saw the men press sullenly forward.

At the Sanitary Commission rooms the girl interviewed the lady manageress, but she could learn nothing definite.

"Miss Byrne? Yes? Oh, Mr. Hendricks Cortlandt's niece? . . . Won't you sit down?"

Ann did so reluctantly. "I hate to take the time to," she admitted, smiling ingratiatingly at her interlocutor. "You see,—I want to go to the front. Do you know where the Army of the Potomac is?"

"No one knows that, exactly; somewhere in southern Pennsylvania, of course."

"I heard newsboys calling out that Lee has crossed the Potomac."

"Yes. There will be another terrible battle soon. You can see how busy we are, here. We weren't half prepared for the losses at Antietam, but now we have supplies enough on hand to care for ten thousand wounded. The most sensible thing you could do would be to settle down and help us."

Ann looked about her, at the busy room. It was true that the women were hard at work; scores of them were scraping lint and rolling bandages. A feverish panic of haste possessed every one, and the girl shivered a little at a sudden realization that at that moment there were ten thousand whole and hearty young men, who, to-morrow perhaps,—surely within a day or two,—would, maimed and suffering, be in need of such supplies. Somehow she couldn't get used to the horror of it. "I can't wait," she said hastily. "I must get in touch with the army, before the battle."

"But, my child, the front is no place for a young lady. Surely you realize that?"

"I know, but my uncle is abroad, and we have just heard that Hendricks Renneslyer, who was reported killed, is alive. . . . There was no one else to go. . . . I had to find out. . . . We were engaged, you see," she added, in the hope of softening the stern eyes fixed on her.

"I see." She was still preoccupied, but kinder.

Before Ann could speak again a breathless young woman came hurrying up to report that fifty gallons of soup had been made and bottled in the restaurant next door.

"And the lemons?" the manageress demanded.

"We have ten cases of them already squeezed."

"Good! Keep the ladies working. We can't have too much." She turned her attention again to Ann, somewhat resentfully. "There are still lemons to be squeezed, Miss Byrne," she said pointedly.

"But I can nurse!" Ann cried. "I have been working in the hospitals in New York ever since they were opened!" She was filled with an enormous scorn of women who were fit only for squeezing lemons.

"Nurse? So young? Extraordinary! In Philadelphia! However, that is neither here nor there. . . . If you can nurse, I dare say we might find you a place on our hospital train; it will start as soon as we get orders."

Ann shook her head. "I can't wait," she said stubbornly. It was in the lull before the storm that she wanted to make her inquiries; she had not come so far only to arrive after everything was over.

"You would not be allowed to go beyond Baltimore without a pass from the governor."

"How can I get a pass?"

"You would have to go to Harrisburg for it,—and it is a great question if you could succeed in reaching the capital. You know Ewell is raiding in that neigh-

borhood. We fear that at any moment he may cut off the city."

"Well," Ann murmured, regardless of high-bred Philadelphia eyebrows lifted at her expense. "Harrisburg next."

She was rather cast down at the delay, and she was, moreover, afraid that Mrs. Cortlandt might succeed in reaching and stopping her. She looked about her for possible aid, and her eyes fell on the only man in the room. He was a young chaplain, gaunt of figure and exalted of face. He was looking at her when she noticed him; his eyes were the sort in which pity lies in ambush; he was a young man born to be gulled.

Ann went over to him at once. "I wish you would help me," she said, trustingly as a little child. She was rather tired from her exciting journey, and her face was white, and extraordinarily touching.

"Anything I can do!" stammered the young man. "Are you in trouble?"

"Yes . . . great trouble." Ann turned a melancholy gaze upon him and decided that he fancied himself in the rôle of a samaritan. She sighed deeply. "I must get to the front," she said, "and I hear I have to have a pass, to go beyond Baltimore."

"They are hard things to get, these days," he murmured sympathetically, "and only fancy,—I have one here that isn't needed."

"You have—a pass?"

He pulled a folded paper from his pocket, and, sure enough, it was a pass. It bore the governor's necessary signature, and it was made out to a Mrs. Edward Blake. When she looked up at him, the young man observed that the girl's gray eyes seemed suddenly black. "Why isn't she,—this Mrs. Blake,—going?"

"Her son died before she could start. I went to Harrisburg for the pass, but when I came back with it, it was too late."

"Oh, the poor woman! . . . Don't you think it seems a pity to waste it?"

He looked bewildered at this direct attack, so she added smoothly, "Of course I know that the governor would give me one,—he is a great friend of my uncle's, you see,—but I can't bear to delay. . . . There's going to be this battle. . . . I want to get there before it's fought. . . . I want to find some one." She paused, hopeless of making any one, even this ruthful youth, understand her perfectly good reasons.

"Wounded?" he interposed unexpectedly. There was an ecstasy of sympathy in his tone.

The girl looked at him appraisingly. What difference did it make, she thought, what methods she used, if, in the end, she won her point? She nodded mournfully.

"But you are already wearing mourning?"

Slowly one of Ann's thinly arched eyebrows stole slightly above its mate, and one corner of her mouth indented itself a very little. Yes, she decided, she

could make this young man do whatever she wished. She met the melancholy expectation of his look, and then her starry eyes dwelt upon a vague distance. "Saving the flag," she murmured, with a nice mixture of pride and grief in her tone.

He clicked his tongue commiseratingly, and Ann thought that he might be about to offer her the consolations of religion, so she said hastily: "If I could only have this pass!"

"It wouldn't do you any good. It isn't made out to you."

"Would any one know that?"

"It wouldn't be right," the young clergyman said firmly, but a wave of color swept from his inordinately low collar to his blond hair.

"I suppose not." Ann drooped again, hopelessly.

His next remark was in the nature of a concession. "Somebody might find you out."

"How could they? . . . And besides,—no one would ever know where I got it."

That was true. It was the merest accident that it was in his possession. "I wish I could give it to you."

She turned pleadingly to him, and she laid one beseeching hand upon his arm. "Oh, do give it to me! If you will, I can start for Baltimore at once. Please let me have it,—please!"

He looked at the slender white fingers irresolutely. Somehow, his was not an arm upon which beautiful young women often leaned, and he burned to be

worthy of this appeal. Ann swept her gray eyes up to his. "You will, won't you?" she said confidently. She held out her other hand, trustfully.

Her evident dependence was too much for him. He put the folded paper in her outstretched fingers, and tingled with a delightful feeling of wickedness. "Of course," he said virtuously, "I shouldn't let you have it, if it were not a case of life and death!"

"No, of course not. . . . I can never thank you,—but I'll never forget you! . . . Come on down with me, and help me find my cab."

She wasted no time in farewells. Her cab was waiting, and she vanished into its gloom with the greatest expedition, but her pretty face popped out again, as she called to her driver, "To the station,—quick!" She smiled at her benefactor, standing, forlorn, on the sidewalk. When she careened around the distant corner, she looked out again and saw that he was still there, a stiff and reluctant figure which had served her turn, and she waved her hand out of the window with crazy gaiety.

CHAPTER XIX

ADVENTURES

As SHE took her seat in the noon train, Ann observed that there were fewer women traveling that day; the car was filled for the most part with soldiers. They were interested in her, that was quite evident, for she never looked up without meeting a pair of smiling boyish eyes, but she was disposed to be discreetly shy with them, and she struck up a protective acquaintance with a grizzled major who was returning to his regiment with one empty sleeve. He succeeded in getting a dubious sandwich for her when the train stopped, and he pointed out to her the sentries guarding each railroad bridge they crossed; they seemed to her very grim and competent. He asked her, after a bit, for whom she was wearing mourning, and Ann plunged into an account of her amazing situation.

"I am wearing it for the man I was engaged to," she said. "And then we heard a rumor that he is still living. I had to find out, and we couldn't get any news through, so I came on."

The major turned a sympathetic glance upon her. "You must be awfully fond of him."

"Not that," Ann said impulsively. "I was going to break my engagement, you see, and when news of

his death came and every one felt so badly, I didn't say anything about it. It seemed too brutal. . . . And so when I heard that he was alive I had to know. You can't imagine the burden of pretending, and besides it makes me ashamed." She broke off and blushed a quick and bountiful red. She could not imagine what had made her break out like that, and confide her extraordinary troubles to a stranger.

He did not comment on them; instead he ran a humorous eye over her abysmal mourning and said dryly that he should think it would be a comfort to her to know.

She consulted him about her probable destination. "Where do you think the Army of the Potomac is?" she demanded.

"I am ordered to Frederick City, as the nearest railroad point. I should try to go there, if I were you. It's your best chance for information. You might even run into the Fifty-Fifth. No one knows. You'll have to spend the night in Baltimore."

"The night!" Ann echoed, with a sinking heart. Nights on trains were all very well, but nights in strange cities were more than she had bargained for. "I—don't know any one there," she faltered childishly.

The major frowned. "I do," he said at length. "I think the woman who runs the Eutaw House would remember me. I was taken there when I lost my arm, and she was very good to me. She'll look after you, I am sure. I'll take you to her."

"Oh, thank you!" murmured Ann. How would the world revolve, she wondered, if it were not for kindly men?

When the major shut the door of the rattling station hack upon them, however, and they started off into an unknown city, she had a brief pang of disquiet. She wondered what Mrs. Renneslyer would say of such indecorous behavior, and she shrugged an emancipated shoulder. As things turned out she need not have had even a passing misgiving, for it soon became evident that the major had but one thought, and that was to disburden himself of his unexpected charge as quickly as possible. They had gone only a block or two when he stuck his head out of the window, and called to the driver to hurry.

"They say there's sure to be a battle just across the Pennsylvania line," he told Ann. "The place is full of rumors. . . . No one knows just where Lee is, and there's Rebel cavalry raiding near Harrisburg. . . . In this damned town they say we'll lose. Baltimore is full of Rebels."

The hostess of the Eutaw House welcomed Ann querulously. "Take you in?" she said doubtfully. "Well, I don't see as I can do anything else. There ain't a mite of room,—but I'll have to manage."

The major, on this assurance, took a hasty departure. His back was scarcely turned when she inquired shrilly, "Known him long?"

"Known who?" Ann asked bewildered. She was beginning to feel dazed and tired.

"That major."

"No. Just to-day, on the train."

"Oh! . . . Well," the landlady surveyed Ann's mourning, "many's the match made like that, these times. . . . Here to-day, and gone to-morrow. . . . There's a sofy in my room. I reckon you can have that."

"I shan't sleep anyway," Ann said hastily. Nothing seemed more impossible to her than that.

"That's what they all say," her hostess remarked, with such sinister cynicism that Ann asked:

"What do you mean,—all?"

"All of 'em who have the time to sleep. If they hadn't a chance to rest any more than I have,—then I'd like to see how they'd feel about sleep! It's bad enough running this hotel with our own boys filling it up. Don't know what I'll do when the Rebs come swarming over me."

Ann turned a startled face. "Do you think they'll take Baltimore?"

"Of course they will, an' me an' my husband with the hotel all done over new just before the war! Some Secesh boys were around last week, talking big, —but the Twenty-Third Wisconsin happened along, an' cleared 'em out in short order. . . . Lie down. . . . That's right. . . . My! You've got a sight of hair, even if it is red. . . . Shet your eyes now, for heaven's sake,—or I'll stand here talking all night."

Ann shut her eyes experimentally; she was certain

that she could not sleep: when she opened them again the morning sun was streaming into the room, and her hostess was standing over her, urging upon her the necessity of haste, if she were still determined upon her mad idea of catching the train to Frederick City. As she slowly stretched out her slender arms and flung back her hands with an energetic snap, Ann could hear the clamor of newsboys from the street below.

"Ewell raids Cumberland Valley! Hooker orders advance! Great battle expected!"

She dressed in a bewildered flurry, and protested impatiently as she choked down the hot coffee and corn bread brought her by a weeping darky maid. She had but one thought in her mind,—to get to the train before it started, for now added to her wish to find out if it were true that Hendricks lived, was a desire to drink more deeply this exhilarating draught of excitement. If there was going to be an important battle she was determined, now that she was so near, to be a part of it. Had her guardian been in New York she would, perhaps, have hesitated, but with only the scandalized aunts to consider, she determined to go on. She would find out about Hendricks, and then, somewhere, she would find a hospital. . . . Her drive to the station—dashing through the crowded streets and swinging crazily around corners—was gorgeously exhilarating, and her spirits soared in response. The station was the center of excitement, and the streets leading to it were filled with people: they tossed aimlessly about, regardless of the hot July sun,

and shouted and gesticulated. As she drove through the crowd Ann caught scraps of news: the Confederates were concentrating their forces north of the Potomac River, and Harrisburg was in great danger. Here and there she heard execrations of General Lee, but oftener a glimpse of an exultant face betrayed the presence of a Secessionist. Little groups of men in blue uniforms marched past her, clearing the street as they went, and once an army band swung along at the head of a whole regiment, riving the warm air with the shrill clamor of fifes.

The train stood puffing and ready before the station, and six or eight soldiers hung out of every window, shouting to their fellows on the platform, and waving indiscriminate greetings. Ann was a Godsend to them; the entire train waved at her, with wild gaiety. She could scarcely make her way through the crowd, and when she finally reached the ticket window the agent hesitated over her request for transportation to Frederick City, but the eloquent plea of her deep mourning, as well as the governor's signature on the pass she mutely offered him, overcame his scruples. When the train started she was sitting in it, surrounded by admiring young soldiers who were joyfully disposed to forget their threatened baptism of fire in the presence of the pretty girl. There was no question, to-day, of her withdrawing from their attentions; the boys were wildly excited at the prospect of an immediate battle, and Ann was softened by a grim realization that these skylarking youngsters might be

among the ill-fated ten thousand for whom sinister preparations were being made; she would not have snubbed them even if she could have done so, which was doubtful. They swarmed about her, firing eager questions at her, and told one another that she was "a plucky one, all right!" Their very numbers made her at ease with them.

The train made poor time; often it backed mysteriously up the track it had so laborously traversed, while the boys shouted hilariously, "We've changed our minds! We aren't going to fight the Johnnies, after all!"—and sometimes it stopped for long intervals, for no apparent reason. When that happened the soldiers swarmed out along the right of way, shouting and leaping like little boys. One of them brought a stalk of goldenrod back to Ann, and she stuck it in her belt. It made a gay note of color on her black weeds. She fidgeted uneasily at each new delay, for she was still afraid of being turned back. Even a trainload of forlorn Rebel prisoners, caught in a raid and rushing northward, did not distract her for long.

At the Monocacy River, three miles from Frederick City, they came to a final halt. The bridge was unsafe, the train men announced, and every one was hurried off the cars, into the blinding heat of a late June afternoon. Immediately the officers began collecting their men in some sort of order; as Ann stood, bewildered, waiting for events to shape her next move, she saw the advance column march off down the rutted, dusty road. The men walked lightly, almost

gaily, and the refrain of a popular song drifted back to her as they went.

As she stood somewhat forlornly a young captain came hurrying up to her. "Where are you going?" he asked curtly.

"To Frederick City," Ann replied, turning wide and confident eyes upon him. "I am trying to find Captain Renneslyer. He was with the Fifty-Fifth New York. Do you know where that regiment is?"

"No,—and you can't go wandering around this country. There's likely to be a battle almost anywhere, anytime. The best thing you can do is to go back to Baltimore."

"I wouldn't think of doing that," Ann protested. She disliked this disagreeable young man, and she ran her eyes indifferently over his person, so that he might know it.

"Sorry," he said, "but back you go. Get right into this train again,—the one you came down in. It will be leaving in a few minutes."

"I won't do anything of the kind," Ann declared furiously.

The officer laughed. "I'm in command here," he reminded her. "It's an order."

Ann's defiance melted under his confidence. "I don't want to go back," she said querulously. "Not yet." Her plea died as he took her elbow in a firm grasp, and propelled her to the train. She had an uncomfortable idea that if she didn't get on board

herself, he would lift her to the platform, so she hastily scrambled up the steps.

"That's a good girl," the captain said, smiling fatuously upon her. "You're too pretty to run any risk of getting shot!"

To escape further humiliation Ann went into the car, and sat down. She was vehemently angry, but quite impotent. From her window she could see the captain's back, and she scowled at it helplessly. There was no one in sight to whom she might appeal. . . . Presently a covered black wagon drove up to the train, and a crooked old driver climbed laboriously down to open the door in the rear. Ann watched him curiously: there was nothing else for her to do. A bevy of young women swarmed surprisingly out of the wagon; it was incredible that it could have held so many hoop skirts, and so many agitated and fluttering girls. A calm nun followed them, prim and self-contained and hot, in her coif and black habit; while her flock boarded the train she stopped to speak to the driver. The girls came trooping into Ann's car, chattering excitedly. Two of them sat down in the seat ahead of her, and turned to smile, in friendly fashion.

"Where are you all from?" Ann demanded.

"The Convent School at Emmettsburg. We all live in the North, and the Mother Superior is sending us home just because she thinks there may be a battle around here somewhere. Isn't it mean?"

The other girl interrupted eagerly, "There were soldiers in the convent grounds this morning," she declared, round-eyed. "They gave their horses a drink, and the Mother Superior sent milk out to the men."

"What regiment?" Ann asked in idle curiosity.

"The Fifty-Fifth New York."

Ann shot to her feet. "I'm going!" she declared hotly.

"Going where?"

"To find the Fifty-Fifth!"

"She has a lover in it!" one of the girls whispered romantically.

Stooping, Ann reconnoitered. The nun had turned toward the train, and the old driver was beginning to climb to his high seat. The captain's uniformed back was plainly to be seen, two car-lengths away. The engine came suddenly to life, and the long train jerked violently: Ann caught the seat back to avoid being thrown down, and then swung herself into the aisle. . . . At the door she almost ran down the placid nun. . . . On the step she halted. The captain was talking with the train conductor, whose gesticulations toward the engine kept him facing that way, and the bus was beginning to move off, in a leisurely and inviting fashion. The train made a convulsive start, and Ann leaped to the ground. The door in the end of the departing bus had swung open with the jolt of its first motion; there was dark sanctuary within. She cast a frantic glance at the unconscious officer, and sprang after it. The horses were barely started; she

caught up easily, and grasping the hand rail in the rear, she bolted into the dusty hot interior of the covered wagon. Immediately she peered out; the train was moving, and the captain had taken off his cap, in salute to it,—to her, Ann hoped, grinning. She settled herself deliberately in the most comfortable corner, and marveled at the ease of her escape. She was delighted to have won in her encounter with the captain; her sense of triumph drowned any doubts she might have had at the wisdom of her course.

It was a forlorn way they traveled, for the fences had been torn from before the houses, to be used for fuel, and the straggling gardens had been trampled by careless hundreds. The convent bus circled around Frederick City, with its needle points of church spires, and the horses dropped to a walk along a badly worn road that cut a straight swath across the fields; the country rolled off on all sides of the little city, lovely and fruitful, with sharp edged, broad hillsides of golden standing crops. No landscape could have been more peaceful, and it seemed to Ann impossible that it should be the setting of a great and terrible battle. . . . The road meandered pleasantly up and down long hillsides. Through the open door in the back Ann could see the mountains that half-circled the yellow fields. The range lay massive, and yet strangely delicate, a soft violet color, in the swimming heat haze. Now and then clouds sailing over it swept a downy shadow across its mobile surface, and Ann watched the marvel, entranced. Looking back at the

mountains she forgot all about her immediate discomfort of heat and dust and hunger; she even found it difficult to remember the urgency of her quest; she wanted only to lose herself in magnificent and impersonal beauty, and she luxuriated in the feeling of unimportance it gave her. . . . She wished that she had some one there with her, close beside her, with whom she might share her joy. . . . Some perfect companion; she had no actual visualization, only a sense of unfulfillment. . . . Now and then the ruts in the road jolted her back to her immediate surroundings. She ate the gritty dust, and, as the long summer day declined, she felt very tired. . . . A blood-red sunset turned the mountains moulten, and under it the straw colored standing crops flushed pink. . . . Another night. . . . Ann wondered uneasily what her reception might be at the convent. Suddenly the bus ceased lurching and groaning, and ran smoothly over a good road. Ann looked out; her unconscious driver had turned in between iron gates, and was taking her down a well-kept driveway. Her view of the mountains was abruptly cut off. She stood up and peered through a tiny peep-hole in the front. All that she could see was the austere black outline of a cross, high against the angry sky. . . . Across her weary mind flashed a confused memory of Densley. . . . He had talked of Catholic churches abroad. . . . Crosses on cathedrals. . . . The driveway swerved, and the peep-hole showed only the thick

green of trees. . . . In a moment they had arrived before a high front stoop, and stopped.

A woman's voice asked, "Any mail, David?"

"No, Sister."

"Did you bring anything back with you?"

"No, Sister."

The bus vibrated uneasily, as the tired horses gathered themselves together for a last effort, which should carry them to the barn. Ann knew that the moment of revealment had come, and she reluctantly poked her abashed face out of the door. "Yes, he did," she said falteringly. "He brought me."

The old driver got down off his seat with amazing alacrity, and ran around to the rear of the bus. "Great God Jehovah!" he murmured piously, when his eyes fell on Ann.

On the top of the high steps was a pretty nun; under her white coif her face looked extraordinarily young and childlike. Her eyes met Ann's with an unmistakable sparkle of amusement. "Did you get in without David's knowing it?" she demanded.

Ann nodded, and ran up the steps. "I had to come," she said, "I am looking for an officer,—Captain Renneslyer."

The nun nodded in her turn. "Come in," she said, slipping her arm through the newcomer's, "and tell the Mother Superior all about it."

Ann's heart sank, but when she was face to face with the wise and kindly head of the convent school

she found little difficulty in telling her story, and she thankfully agreed to stop for the night. She occupied one of the scholar's empty cubicles, and the gay little Sister brought her supper on a tray, chatting with her while she ate it. She was full of the excitement of soldiers in the convent close, but she knew nothing of the personnel of the troops.

Ann slept for twelve hours, lost to the world and her plight. When she awoke she glanced bewilderedly about the white room where she lay. A girl sat looking at her, very grave and silent.

"Oh," Ann said, after a moment's stare. "I remember."

"You came in here last night, dead beat."

"You're not a nun, are you?"

"No,—but I reckon I'll likely be one. . . . I'm just a boarding scholar here. . . . You know the Sisters had a school, but they have sent all the girls home who could get there. . . . I live in Mississippi. I've never heard from my folks in six months, and so I'm here. That's all."

Ann stretched out a sympathetic hand. She could not have believed it possible to have so complete a sense of kinship with a Rebel. "I'm sorry!" she murmured impotently.

The girl laughed harshly, and paid no attention to the friendly hand. "You're a Federal,—that's what you are! I don't want your pity! We'll beat you yet!" All at once she crumpled up beside the bed in a flood of tears; Ann had never seen any one cry so

hard; she felt her hand taken in a fierce grip. "Oh," gasped the stranger, "I don't half know what I'm saying! I've got a lover. He is in the fighting, of course. And I never hear,—not a word,—ever!"

Ann murmured ineffectual comfortings; she envied this girl the genuine passion of her grief. When she had thought Hendricks lost, she had been unable to feel like that. . . . "I am looking for a soldier," she announced. "That is why I am here."

"There were Federal troops here yesterday,—the Fifty-Fifth New York."

"I know. Did you see,—or hear anything of,—Captain Renneslyer?"

The girl shook her head. "No. I didn't go down."

There came a sharp knock on the door, and the pretty nun thrust her face into the crack. "Good morning," she said. "Do you know anything about bandage making? And scraping lint?"

"Do I? I did nothing else for six months!"

"Then dress quickly, and come down. The battle will be right here in Emmetsburg! General Hooker is concentrating all his army here, the grocer's boy said so! And every one knows that Lee holds the mountain passes: the Confederates are just pouring down every road. Listen!"

The girls did so. Ann was immediately conscious of a dull rumbling sound, distant and continuous. "What is it?"

"Federal cannon on the corduroy road. They have been going by for an hour now. The Mother Supe-

rior says that the convent will undoubtedly be used for a hospital! Think of it! And we have no dressings. All the Sisters are gathered in the refectory, cutting the linen into strips. . . . Come quickly, and show us how!"

Ann's intention had been to start very early in the morning, but she could not refuse this urgent request. For hours she showed the panicky nuns how to scrape lint and roll bandages. She wondered what sort of nursing the wounded men would get if they should be carried into the convent. She was eager to be gone, for she knew that she could never bring herself to leave, once the place was really turned into a hospital, but the Mother Superior was quite firm in forbidding any such thing. "You must stay here, my daughter, as long as the convent is tenable," she said smoothly. "It may be that we shall all be driven out. Your troops are mounting cannon in our peach orchard."

Soldiers in blue swarmed all over the convent grounds. They came from Michigan; they were backwoodsmen, friendly and noisy, and the nuns retired before them to gather in the cupola, where they might peep down unmolested. It seemed quite likely that this spot might prove the center of a battle, and Ann's nerves tingled at the thought. She looked at the mysterious mountains without a trace of her previous enchantment, for down their dark defiles enemy soldiers were marching, sinister and dangerous.

Before supper the Mother Superior called together

the half-dozen southern girls who remained in the school. "I have decided to send you north, my daughters," she announced, "and Miss Byrne, too. I can not take the responsibility of keeping you here."

The girls looked at one another with white and recalcitrant faces, but only Ann ventured to protest. "We can never get through to Frederick City, with our artillery coming up the pike."

The Mother Superior smiled. "At ten o'clock every morning a train leaves Gettysburg for the North, and I have advices that the road is passable in that direction. . . . You can all be accommodated in the convent at Harrisburg until you have had time to communicate with your families. You, too, Miss Byrne. I can not take the responsibility of having you remain here."

The idea of leaving Emmettburg, where a great battle was about to be fought, and going to an unheard-of little junction like Gettysburg, was almost more than Ann could bear. She longed for the courage to refuse to be disposed of in so high-handed a fashion, but there was a certain definiteness about the Mother Superior, and, immediately after breakfast, she allowed herself to be packed, together with seven other girls, into the convent bus.

She had been right, the road was blocked, but old David drove them by mysterious by-ways across the fields, and did not turn into the pike until he was well ahead of the crowd, and had only mounted officers, and now and then an advance group of Buford's cavalry-

men, to contend with. Looking back, Ann could follow the slow progression of the artillery by the cloud of yellow dust that hung over it. The horses made better time than they had done the day before, and the girls were thrown against one another, as the bus bumped over the rough corduroy road. The six southerners were delighted at the idea of going to Gettysburg, for a passing officer told them that he had heard the place was in the possession of the Confederate cavalry. Ann's pensive friend of the morning before was radiant. "Now you'll see what real soldiers look like," she told Ann, wrinkling her little nose at a company of men in blue uniforms, plodding along in the dust of their wake.

There was nothing for Ann to say; she hated the thought of entering a conquered Pennsylvania town with a bevy of Rebel girls, and her impatience at being coerced rose high. She wanted to get out of the convent bus, and join the blue-clad army,—her army,—and her old regret at being a girl again overwhelmed her.

About five miles out of town they left the Union troops behind them. The road seemed all at once amazingly tranquil and rural, with the convent bus all alone on it.

Gettysburg was strangely quiet as they drove into it. There were no children playing in the streets, and the square in the center of the town was deserted. There were no soldiers to be seen, either; it was like a place under a spell. At the station they found the

Harrisburg train waiting to start, but no one could say when. The nun in charge of the young women decided to take them aboard, and there await events. The cars were partly filled with refugees,—little family groups of men, women, children, and household goods. Every one was talking excitedly of the possibility of Ewell's cavalry holding the train up. The girls took their seats unwillingly; they were anxious to get a glimpse of a gray uniform, and they sulked before their guardian Sister's face, and complained behind her back. Ann hated them, and, rather than talk to them, she made friends with a woman across the aisle and listened to her tale of having seen a Union soldier shot.

"It was right at the west end of Chambersburg Street the day before yesterday," she said. "He lay with his arms stretched out, and his face up to the sun. . . . It was awful hot. . . . I hated to see him lying there, and as soon as the Rebs went off down the street, I ran out and dragged him into the shade. He was dead,—and he was Bert West. I'd known him all his life. He volunteered in the Gettysburg cavalry, when Lee's men began to raid around here."

Ann could see that the southern girls considered this death an achievement. She felt that she could not endure the brief time with them until the train reached Harrisburg.

All at once the nun remembered that she had not bought the tickets, and arose in a great flurry to get

them. Ann, observing her jailer's panicky rush to the station, smiled grimly. All at once she was filled with a sense of security;—she rose tranquilly and strolled to the rear door of the car. The girls, hating the northerner, allowed her to go in silence, and she walked calmly down the steps and across the platform. The main street lay before her, hot and empty, and she marched briskly off down it. It was as simple as that; no one noticed her departure; there was not so much as an exclamation over it.

CHAPTER XX

GETTYSBURG

ANN found shelter in a little house on Chambersburg Street: she felt sure that it must be respectable because it stood next door to a righteous-appearing Lutheran Church, and she liked the look of the place besides. There were red geraniums in the front yard and a heavy green vine over the door. She liked its hostess also. She had found her trimming the geraniums with an extraordinary placidity, in view of the fact that there were said to be enemy soldiers in Gettysburg. She welcomed a lodger whose resentment over this fact was as high as her own, and Ann gathered that her attention to her flower-beds was merely a contemptuous gesture.

"The people over there," she said, pointing across the street, "are Secessionists."

She took Ann into her stuffy little house and brought her cold water from the pump in the back yard. When the girl had washed away the dust of her journey, the two settled down in the stifling parlor to talk, and to watch from behind the Nottingham curtains for a glimpse of Rebel soldiers. The little town remained ominously silent: Ann could plainly hear the clamor of the train to Harrisburg, when it finally started. It was louder than anything else except the persistent squeak of her hostess' rocker.

A little boy came running down the street shouting, and as he came near they could hear that he was calling: "The Rebs are coming!" Ann ran out into the front yard to question him.

"There's a whole brigade with wagons; they're after clothing and shoes. That's all I know! Lemme go on!"

The two women hastened to lock up the house; disregarding the stifling heat, they even closed the windows and fastened the plugs in the frames.

"Shoes and clothing!" snorted the hostess. "If I had my way the whole Confederate Army would go barefoot and naked!"

Suddenly into the stillness of the house broke clamorous sounds,—shouts and the thunder of horses' feet.

"That's from the Emmetsburg Pike, it must be our men!"

"It's Buford's Cavalry,—it must be!"

They opened the door and the noise came louder. It was infinitely reassuring. As they watched, the end of the street was filled with a great cloud of dust, and suddenly a front rank of cavalry broke through it, and bulked huge and black against it. The men thundered down the street four abreast, followed rank on rank by their fellows. They sat their horses jauntily and their blue caps were rakishly set. Women waved their handkerchiefs to them as they passed by, and the soldiers called out greetings, and laughed as they rode to the attack. In five minutes they were

gone; in half an hour they came loafing back, gay with triumph.

"We drove 'em out all right!" a blond Swede from Illinois told Ann, as he stopped to drink the water she offered him. "They ran all the way to the creek. They were in a good position there; we weren't strong enough to attack 'em."

"Where are you going now?"

"We are ordered to camp on the ridge by the seminary on the other side of town, but we are placing vedettes on all the roads. They say General Reynolds has been ordered to occupy the town: looks as if this is the place all right. It's a pity you ladies aren't safe away."

Ann laughed. "I can nurse," she said. "If there is going to be a battle I can be useful."

"Why don't you report to the Medical Corps? They have taken over the seminary building for a hospital. It's likely we'll need a big place like that before we get through around here. Why don't you follow along after us? We've a lot of sunstroke cases already."

Into Ann's mind rushed the tales she had heard of field hospitals and the atrocious care men received in them,—care vastly different from the well equipped wards in which she had worked. She reflected that the Sanitary Commission would be along presently; she might take charge, for a day or two, and show them how to run a hospital. Her uncle would be proud of her when he heard her story.

"I am going," she said to her hostess. "I have worked for a year and a half in hospitals in New York."

The woman smiled at her anxiously. "Reckon you belong there, then," she said reluctantly, "but I kind of hate to see you go off like this."

Her dubious glance followed Ann down the street and gave the girl a warm sense of being looked after. She thought that she would always remember this kind friend bound to her by such exciting events. It was not until she had crossed the town that it struck her she did not know her hostess' name.

There was great confusion at the seminary, which was being transformed from a school into a hospital with a speed in which, it seemed to Ann, there was a sort of panic. The sunstroke cases were all on the top floor, close under the hot roof, where the beds the students had left were ready for them. As she passed through the intervening floors in her search for the doctor in charge, it became evident to her that the Union officers expected vast casualties and were making grim preparations to care for them, but she found the doctor rather indifferent to her proffered assistance. He had, he said, half a dozen men nurses, whom he had picked up in Gettysburg, and Ann's delightful dream of running a hospital single-handed until her friends of the Sanitary Commission arrived, was shattered on the spot. Instead she set humbly to work bringing cold water to the patients, and fanning them as they lay exhausted. No one of them was

alarmingly ill, and as the darkness settled down they all went to sleep. There was nothing for Ann to do, and if she had known the name of her friend in town, or even the street on which she lived, she would have returned there for the night, but as she did not, she found instead an empty room in the seminary, and locked herself into it.

The seminary yard was crowded with troops; the men lay about on the grass laughing and talking, so Ann kept her curtains drawn until she blew out her candle. Her window faced the mountains, and when she threw it open she gasped in amazement. The night was velvet black and the stars in the sky were hot shining dots; Ann could follow the outline of the mountain range only where it cut arbitrarily against them. The long swelling slope was invisible, but on it were myriads of points of light, bright and hot like the stars, only nearer and more flickering. They were the camp-fires of the enemy, and as she looked at them Ann thrilled with a sensation that was as much anticipation as fear.

The next morning the girl was awakened by picket firing down the pike. She sprang up, dazed, and for a moment glared about her wildly at her strange room. There were no more volleys, but down in the yard beneath her window there was a great turmoil. Peering out she saw that a wagon had been backed up to the main door and that two or three men were being taken from it on improvised stretchers. She flung on her clothes and ran down to find that a group of

wounded pickets, the first casualties of the fight in a railroad cut not far from the seminary, lay in one of the recently cleared lower rooms. There were no cots for them, and it was a fortunate man who had a blanket between him and the floor. As Ann paused in the doorway, her glance fell on the back of a rough brown head that seemed to her extraordinarily like Hendricks'. Her heart beat quickly as she stooped to look. It was not he, but her fancy that he might be there persisted and she scrutinized each man anxiously. It seemed to her much more likely that he should turn up here among the wounded, than that he should have died on some other battle-field.

The doctor in charge of the hospital had little use for women nurses, and he detailed Ann to work very much like that which she had done in New York. In the midst of the excitement of battle she sat down, with her little professional air of sufficiency, and took letters at the patients' dictation. She had never before seen casualties in so forlorn a condition as these, straight from battle, with their uniforms all torn and bloody, and with dirt ground into their wounds. The numbers alarmed her, too, yet more men were being brought in continually; it seemed to her impossible to win, when suffering such losses, and she became horribly depressed. At nine o'clock a report reached the hospital that General Reynolds had arrived in Gettysburg in advance of the first corps, and that he had mounted a fresh horse and galloped out past the seminary to the front. Some soldiers reported they had

seen him, surrounded by a half-dozen aides. The hospital corps felt the stimulus of this good news at once; even Ann was certain that the horrid tide of wounded would ebb with the arrival of the popular Union leader. She had by this time stopped writing letters to relatives at home, and was engaged in cutting the uniforms from horribly mangled men; the regular nurses were unable to cope with the wounded, and she was welcome to do what she could. She worked feverishly, with entire preoccupation in her task, but no matter how quick she was, she made little headway, and long lines of men lay on the floors without any attention. Some of them moaned for water, and others screamed horribly from the pain of their wounds.

All around the seminary the battle raged, but Ann had no time to wonder where the victory lay. She was not certain which army had possession of the town, but she knew that the ground in the front and about the seminary building was held by Union troops. There was great activity among them, and off to the right a constant deafening sound of artillery. The nearer guns had been placed in a grove; only the smoke from them oozing through the tree-tops, white and thin in the dead air, betrayed where they were placed. The fighting was so near now that often the wounded came in without stretchers; they crawled back from the front by themselves, or were roughly helped by a less seriously hurt companion.

Ann did not know what time it was when the de-

vastating news came that General Reynolds had been killed, but after that she worked grimly on, without hope of a victorious issue from the fighting. The day seemed as long as an ordinary week; she was conscious of no sensation of hunger, and she forgot all about lunch, but when some one brought her food she gulped it down and was miraculously invigorated by it. It was stiflingly hot in the seminary building, adding the last touch of torture to the sufferings of the men.

By one o'clock the rooms on the lower floor were so crowded with wounded that it was with difficulty Ann could move about among them, and by two the store of supplies which in the morning had seemed to her adequate for any demand, had almost dwindled to nothing. Even water was so scarce that she was forced to be niggardly with it; and at best it was only lukewarm stuff which her feverish patients scorned while they clamored for it. Men lay for hours with their wounds undressed, their lives ebbing away with the seeping blood that stained their blue uniforms. At three o'clock the last of the scraped lint was used and an hour later every sheet and towel in the place had been torn into strips to staunch wounds. Across the yard to the south was a smaller building, and Ann decided to search there for linen. When she opened the door she faced a great gust of afternoon heat. Her bonnet with its black veil lay where she had hung it the night before, on a hook by the door, so she put it on, as a protection from the fierce sun. The crape

brought Hendricks suddenly to her mind. It now seemed to her highly probable that he was dead. The extraordinary thing was, she thought, that any soldier could live through any battle. She paused for a moment on the step; the yard below her was crowded with excited violent men, and off to the right she could see that the regiments holding the grove of trees had been swept back to the ridge just in front of the seminary. The reports of their carbines came very loud. She plunged down into the whirlpool below her and was flung back and forth, impotently. There was much incoherent shouting, and suddenly, while she looked, a band of men in blue uniforms swept over the crest of the hill, almost upon her. Close on their heels were men in gray. The Union leader held a flag high over his head; the clear red and white colors caught the sun beautifully. The men were in a panic of retreat. As she looked one of them paused, brought his rifle to his shoulder and sent a shot back in the direction from which he had come, but having done so, he hurried on after his fellows. They bore down on Ann with an irresistible force, and she found herself carried along with them until they all brought up against the seminary fence on the other side of the knoll. There they paused for a moment, breathing hard, and Ann demanded spiritedly to be allowed to go back to the hospital. A clamor of opposition arose at the suggestion, and a young lieutenant appeared out of the confusion.

"You can't go back," he said briefly. "The enemy will have this hill inside half an hour. You must come along with us."

It was in vain the girl pleaded her duties: the officer was firm in his decision that she should not fall into the hands of the enemy. Two soldiers lifted her over the crisscross log fence, and, once on the other side, the spirit of flight took possession of her, too, and she hurried breathlessly along with her rescuers. They were, she supposed, going back to the town, but as she came down from the hill where the seminary stood, she found that she had lost her sense of direction; she could not tell where she was going; she could only follow blindly. She was in a world of horrible confusion. . . . A sudden pandemonium of noise burst about her. . . . Stunning reports that made her ears ring came too quickly upon one another to distinguish the separate detonations, and from a near-by knoll a rapid series of white puffs rose gallantly against the shimmering blue of the mid-summer sky. . . . About her now the ground was strewn untidily with haversacks, scraps of paper, canteens, cartridge boxes, and here and there portions of loaves of bread. . . . It was like a ghastly, deserted, picnic ground, except for heaps of huddled figures, some of which stirred, impotently.

They bore on toward the town, although no one seemed to know why. Rumors that the enemy already held it shook the retreating troops. They were able to make an entrance, however, and Ann found the

commonplace, homely streets inexpressibly heartening. She thought that she would try to find her friend of the night before, but she was too tired and too confused to be coherent about it, and she allowed herself to be swept along with the group of men who had taken charge of her since she left the seminary. Unexpectedly, at an angle in the village street, they came upon trouble. A band of Union men were lined up across the pavement, their carbines at their shoulders. They were arrestingly menacing, so Ann shrank into a convenient doorway to watch them, just as the shattering crash of their first volley awoke the echoes along the house-fronts, and rattled the glass panes in the windows behind her. All at once she found herself alone, and suddenly she became terrified. She tried to open the door against which she cowered, but it was locked; she beat upon it fruitlessly, but no one paid any attention to her. Her clenched fists were bruised, but she continued to pound the solid panel. Obedient to an order the men before her knelt, their carbines at their shoulders. At the ring of the officer's voice, Ann swung around; above the men towered a commanding figure; she looked, and swept her fingers over her eyes, and looked again. Fear dropped away before her incredulity. She could not believe her eyes, but it was Hendricks, there was no doubt about it, and she laughed aloud in crazy relief. As she plunged toward him she could hear his voice braying out an infuriated command. He turned as she came, and fell back in stupefied amazement. It seemed to

her a long moment before recognition came into his dumfounded face.

"Ann!" he gasped at length. "Good God—Ann!"

As for Ann,—foolish tears were pouring down her cheeks, and she could only nod, with a forced and trembling smile.

Hendricks shifted his revolver to his left hand, and shook her violently with his right. "What in hell are you doing here?" he demanded urgently.

His hand on her arm hurt, and Ann gulped down her tears, and pulled back. "Oh, Hendricks, you aren't dead, after all!" she said incoherently.

He towered above her in furious question. "What are you doing here?" he repeated, as he turned to shake a clenched fist in the direction of the invisible enemy. "What in God's name are you here for?"

"You are not dead!" Ann repeated stupidly, and added, with a flash of joyous self-revelation, "I'm glad!" Self-respect came back to her, and clothed her gloriously.

"You can't stay here," Hendricks was shouting. He whirled her back under her portico. "It's no place for a young lady,—can't you see that? Why didn't you stay in New York? Why don't you stay with the Sanitary Commission? Why do you have to follow me?" His voice rose and broke in a childish crescendo of rage. "What'll I do with you now, in God's name, with the Rebs taking the town?"

"I'm all right," Ann protested unconvincingly, "now that I've seen you."

"All right?" he echoed. He took off his cap and flung it violently on the ground. "You've got to get away! You've got to make the Baltimore Pike, where our people are coming up. I can't go with you! I can't leave here!" He turned his attention momentarily to his command, and roared a direction to the men to fire "Lower! Lower!" Ann looked at him attentively; his face had hardened into sterner lines, and his mouth was firm set. She was extraordinarily proud of him; looking at him, she was animated by a sensation of the sweetest affection,—the most soft sisterliness. He seized the thick hair on his forehead and pulled it violently.

Some one came up to them, in the momentary isolation of their interview, and Ann turned to see a slim young man, whose trim figure, in the midst of the battle grime, gave her a swift impression of elegance. He saluted Hendricks, and said, "Is there anything I can do? Your wife,—it would give me pleasure to conduct her to the rear." His English was tinged with a faint alien accent, Ann thought, and the vivacity of his brown eyes caught her attention even in that crowded moment.

"Well, take her, then," Hendricks answered ungraciously. "Some one must look after her! Find our army,—Baltimore Pike.—She can go through to the rear. Go on, Ann.—In God's name don't stand there! Go on!"

As she moved uncertainly forward, he leaped toward his command and demanded of them whether

they were out bird-shooting. If that was why they were aiming so high?

The stranger put out his hand, and pulled Ann toward him. "Pardon," he murmured with amazing conventionality. "It is well to make haste." He pushed his arm through hers, and hurried her back down the street, empty, under the enemy's fire. Now and then a shattered pane of glass fell with a silver tinkle like a shaken bell, curiously distinct through the heavier crash of musketry. As they ran, Hendricks came plunging after them.

"Ann!" he shouted. "Ann, who are you wearing that mourning for? Uncle?"

"No," Ann called back. "For you!" And her last glimpse of him showed him bursting from a haze of bewilderment back into action.

CHAPTER XXI

OVER NIGHT

AFTERWARD Ann could not have said how they found their way out of the panic-stricken town of Gettysburg. She had only confused memories of being pulled out of the road while groups of soldiers charged past, of lurking under protecting porticos, of dodging around houses, and in and out of back yards. Once they almost tumbled over a pile of men lying dead at a corner, and after that the girl concentrated her attention on searching the ground before her, lest she should stumble on some dying soldier; she could almost feel the sickly softness of his body, as she fled. She would have said that this nightmare went on for hours, but when at last they won free of the settlement the sunlight still lay in long tranquil lanes across the fields, so she knew it could not have taken a very long time, after all.

"Baltimore?" her escort murmured vaguely. "It is—where?"

"It doesn't make any difference where we go," Ann urged him; "just so we get away from this horrible town."

The farther fields were strangely empty and peaceful, in the golden light. Cattle grazed contentedly there, unmindful of an occasional riderless horse that wandered among them, with a dragging rein. Near at

hand small bands of men were running about; it was hard to believe them anything but aimless. Fugitives passed them in compact groups, or strung along singly. Now and then two or three, fleeter than the rest, seemed, in the midst of the confusion, to be competing in a private foot race; oblivious and concentrated, they shot past, breathing hard in the blazing late afternoon.

To avoid them Ann and her escort bore to the left, and came upon a road that led up to the hilltops beyond the town; Union artillery was moving along it, and the two fell in behind one of the six-mule wagons. They made good progress; in no time at all the village was well behind them, while ahead was a peaceful country cemetery, where Union troops were feverishly tearing up the gravestones, and mounting guns upon commanding positions.

Ann's protector was halted twice, but he produced mysterious papers which cleared their way, and soon they were free of the actual battle. A long straight road stretched before them, crowded with incoming Union troops; a heavy white dust rose over it, and caught the mellow sunlight. It was the Baltimore Pike. Ann paused, unwilling, but firm.

"You must go back," she cried, "back to your regiment!"

"And you?"

"I shall be all right." She managed to smile, shakily.

He looked at her with singularly intent brown eyes.

"I have no regiment. . . . I am not even American. . . . Come, it is late," he added urgently. "We must find your Sanitary Commission before the night. It should come up this road, from Washington." They plunged on, making the best time they might, over ground deeply cut by the heavy artillery wagons and congested with the traffic of the battle.

Officers with little knots of aides about them galloped by, in a frantic hurry, and a column of cavalry, carbines across their saddles, came near riding them down. The men were flogging their blown horses mercilessly, and they called out questions about the day's battle. Ann's protector pulled her into the roadside hedge to allow them to pass; the moment's rest was like a tonic to the exhausted girl. After that the two fugitives took to the fields, and gradually, as they walked on, the firing became more impersonal. It was very bad footing. Ann's skirts caught continually on the stubble, and after a few minutes of this, when stooping to loosen an entangled fold, she was conscious of feeling alarmingly dizzy. In the fields they found other refugees from the battle. There were men trying to find a short-cut to their regiments, men looking for food, for water, or for a place in which to die. Countless numbers of wounded had wandered away from the fighting, but Ann no longer took in their sufferings, and once she drank greedily from an abandoned canteen; the lukewarm water was inexpressibly precious. . . . She was only half-conscious that her elbow was being held in a close grasp, but now

and then, when her companion spoke to her, it seemed to her that she was a long time in answering him.

When the world was filled with a red sunset glow Ann's escort caught the rein of a wandering horse that blundered against them, and with an encouraging word to the girl, swung himself into the big cavalry saddle. When he repeated what he had said, and Ann understood that he wished her to climb up behind him on the horse that loomed so high above her, she shook her head childishly.

"I couldn't do that," she said decidedly, and she looked longingly at the ground at her feet. It was covered with little sharp stones, and she drooped, discouraged. "I'd rather stay here," she murmured.

Her companion reached down, and shook her shoulders sharply. "Come up at once," he said. His black eyes glared at her ferociously; he caught her arm, and began pulling her toward him.

She never remembered just how she finally managed to climb up. She had an indistinct recollection of some confused argument about it, and of the unexplained presence of a soldier, his head roughly tied in a grimy bandage, who lifted her from below, to an accompaniment of rough endearments, while her companion dragged at her from above, but it all merged mistily into the time that followed, when she sat balanced on the horse's wide back, her arms about a stranger's neck, and her cheek against his shoulder chafed by his rough uniform. . . . She gathered that they were lost, but it did not seem important.

. . . With the angry red sunset, the firing reluctantly ceased, but for a time the twilight was hideously peopled with voices; it was not until they had for some time traveled up a dark black lane, that they left everything behind them. Ann had fallen asleep, her head on the foreigner's shoulder, and he had turned in the saddle to slip one arm about her yielding body, when the horse stumbled heavily over some trifling obstacle and he lurched unsteadily.

Ann roused herself unwillingly. "Where are we?"

The stranger shrugged, in the darkness. "Who knows? The question is,—are you exhausted?"

Ann did not answer, but it was, indubitably, the question; she was almost at the end of her strength.

A little farther on they came to a clearing on the roadside, where the darkness was less enveloping. The horse stopped, wistfully, and stretching out his nose, he neighed. A startlingly quick answer came from the gloom; there was a burst of raucous barking, and the sound of a chain resisting the rushes of a dog.

"It must be that there is a house. Shall we see?"

Ann slipped down; she was so stiff that for a moment she could scarcely stand, and she clung to the stirrup leather helplessly. She wanted to go with her protector when he left her to explore, for she was more afraid of the dark than she had been of the Confederate guns; while she waited she had hard work to fight down her nervous terrors, and when her friend came groping back through the gloom, and touched her unexpectedly with his outstretched hand, it was with

difficulty that she stifled an impulse to scream. Instead, she seized his arm and held to it convulsively.

"It is all very well," he was saying reassuringly. "It is a house, and a fire that we may yet save,—but —the people have left. It must be because of the battle." He looked at her with great gravity, "Will you come?"

"Come?" echoed Ann, bewildered. There seemed to be nothing else for her to do, but she hung back, with a flashing thought of her guardian. "You mean —stay there, with you?"

"We have no choice. We are lost, you know, and in this darkness it is impossible to find the road. I know not but we may ride into the Rebel lines."

"But,—is there nothing else to do?"

"What? I ask you."

"I can't think of anything!" she said miserably. "And I am monstrously tired!"

The house was very small and mean, but there was a dwindling fire, and a pile of kindling beside it; in a moment a blaze sprang up, and filled the room with dancing light. . . . The young officer brought bedding from an inner room, and, arranging it at a comfortable distance from the fire, he insisted upon seating Ann ceremoniously before he went to unsaddle the horse. She sat upright on the soft heap for a moment, her body slim and straight as a pipe stem above the great mound of her skirt, but she felt deliciously drowsy, and the pile of rough blankets was very comfortable. She told herself primly that it would not do

to doze, but her escort did not return. . . . It seemed a long time. . . . In a vague distance she could hear him speaking comforting words to the agitated dog. . . . She slipped down lazily upon the blankets, murmuring that she must keep awake, then roused herself for a moment, and wondered about her hoops,—if they were, perhaps, showing too much white stocking,—and she pushed them down pettishly before she slumped over again, helpless with sleep. . . . She was indefinitely aware of her companion's return, and of his arranging something to shield her from the heat of the fire.

She awoke reluctantly in the morning. . . . She was stiff from her exertions of the day before, and stupid from deep sleep; she stretched her sinuous body luxuriously and smiled at the antics of her hoops. Her first definite consciousness was the sound of rain on the roof; as she lay listening to it the strangeness of her surroundings suddenly came home to her, and she sat up, startled into complete wakefulness. For a moment she thought that she was alone in the strange place, and the glance she flung abroad had panic in it, but as she met the steady gaze of her companion of the night before, from his place across the room, she smiled, like a reassured child. His dark face was haggard, and dramatically intent upon her; something defenseless in its emotional betrayal touched the girl unexpectedly.

He did not speak, but only continued to look at her, so she said nervously, "Good morning." Then, wishing

to break the tension of that unquieting gaze, she glanced beyond him through the window, where the green hills loomed distinctly through the woolly brown of the rain. "It is morning, isn't it?" she inquired. "Have we been here—all night?" She flushed with her question, hotly.

The man got stiffly to his feet. "Yes," he said. "It is the first dawn."

She glanced about her in the murk of the stormy new day, and shivered, for the tiny room was as dreary as her awakening realization of their predicament. "I wonder where we are."

He smiled, under the dashing line of his black mustache, and shrugged his shoulders. "We are out of the world,—you and I."

Ann's eyes widened. "Like babes in the woods," she agreed. "Only there are no robins. . . . Well, I suppose it couldn't have been helped. . . . I wonder if there is anything to eat?"

"I have heard chickens. It is possible there are eggs."

"Eggs!" echoed Ann rapturously. "Do go and look for them!"

She seized the opportunity of his absence to rearrange her tumbled hair, and to wash her face and hands at a pump in the yard. She was greatly cheered after these simple rites, and more ready to face her decidedly unconventional situation. She hoped, nervously, that the foreign officer would not think it was her habit to stay out over night with strange gentle-

men. When he came back she was miraculously freshened,—such being the recuperative power of nineteen.

He had found eight eggs, and a forgotten pail half filled with berries, and Ann discovered the remains of a hoe cake; it was not a bad breakfast, and they ate it to the increasing accompaniment of the artillery's thunder, comfortably distant, and, after the preceding day's experiences, not particularly menacing.

As she regretfully finished her last egg, Ann said, "Do you know that I don't even know your name? And yet—!" She broke off with a smiling glance about her.

"My name is Guido," he answered, "Guido Avezzana."

"Are you an Italian?" Ann asked eagerly. She had never met an Italian gentleman before, and with the gleam of his smiling assent, her mind flashed unexpectedly to Densley Howard. This was, indubitably, a part of what he had wanted for her,—acquaintance with romantic-looking foreigners.

"I am Piedmontese. . . . I am in your country as military observer for my king,—for Victor Emmanuel."

It had never occurred to Ann before that it was a romantic thing to serve a king, but she liked the way in which he announced his allegiance, and her beaming eyes betrayed her. Avezzana leaned toward her as he talked, interest in his own.

What they said was unimportant. She told him that

she had never been in Italy,—no, nor in Europe, although she spoke French rather well, really, and she reluctantly admitted that she knew no Italian. It was a beautiful language, she commented, and he replied with a burst of liquid syllables, that, translated, made Ann stiffen self-consciously. She told herself, sensibly, that to say a language was not so beautiful as she was too absurd a statement to notice, but her careless laugh was a trifle delayed. Avezzana did not laugh, but he smiled subtly, and his eyes remained intent. Under their regard, Ann became at length, in spite of herself, uneasily silent.

Even a half pail of berries topping off four eggs each, will not last two healthy young people forever, and as the last delicious morsel vanished, Avezzana, who had not failed to take in Ann's morning freshness, said suddenly, "Is it, then, that you love him so much?"

In her amazement Ann dropped the pail; it clattered on the bare floor with an entirely disproportionate amount of noise. "Love whom?" she demanded, honestly puzzled.

"Your captain."

"Hendricks?" Her white teeth showed in a reminiscent little grin; it amused her to have the old question so squarely put.

"You come through danger to see him."

"Yes,—that's true." She smiled wickedly at his confusion.

The young Italian regarded her with eyes that were almost tragically intense; it was evident that he found

the situation too much for him. "Why did you come?" he asked, and his voice took a deeper note.

She became somewhat nervous under his increasing solemnity. "I came because we all thought he was dead," she explained, "and then I heard he wasn't,—but I had to be sure."

"You wondered, possibly, if you were—free?"

She nodded her bright head. "Exactly."

Avezzana leaned nearer, across the table. His manner was somehow changed; he was not less deferential, but he was, in a subtle fashion, more intimate, and without taking time for thought, Ann pushed her chair back, instinctively.

"We must be getting started," she announced.

Her companion continued to look at her; speculation had leaped into his black eyes. "Do not make haste," he urged. "It is a pity to leave this,—our little house." His voice caressed the place, and he held Ann's eyes with his. Suddenly he stretched out his hand, and touched her slim wrist where it showed, white, below her black sleeve.

Regardless of the tension she sensed in the close room, Ann laughed, and at the clear sound he drew his hand away so quickly that she thought the touch had, after all, been accidental. "It isn't much to boast of,—our little house," she commented lightly. "Although it did keep us from the rains."

Avezzana frowned. "You will admit, madame, that I have been well behaved here."

Remembrance of his kindness of the day before

swept over Ann. "You are so good!" she cried remorsefully. "And I am such a bother!"

"When you are gone, I fear what you call my goodness may be a thing I shall regret."

The girl looked the interrogation she lacked the courage to voice, and he continued. "It is because you are so beautiful."

"You mustn't say that to me."

"Why not?"

"Well,—it's ridiculous, for one thing."

Avezzana continued to look at her closely. "I thought possibly—because of—your husband."

"My—husband?" Ann's tone vibrated with amazement, and suddenly her eyes widened, and a light danced in them, as the delicious realization came to her that the young Italian thought her a married woman. "You mean Hendricks?" she said demurely. "I suppose perhaps he wouldn't like it."

"And do you never do anything of which he disapproves?"

"I never do anything else!"

"Then—why not be kind to me?"

"But I am kind, am I not? I want to be."

He may have thought her wistfulness provocative, and probably he did not realize that, in the simplicity of the puritan 'sixties, even had she been the experienced matron he took her for, she would in all probability have been honestly amazed by his advances. He seized her hand, and bent over it, across the little table. "You are adorable!" he cried, his restraint released.

He was unprepared for the strength with which she wrenched herself free, although he made no effort to hold her. "Please don't," she whispered feebly. She was trembling all over, so that she could scarcely speak.

"If you do not wish it,—no!" he said, instantly compliant, "but you are like nothing I have seen before. How is it possible that I should not love you?"

Obeying an instinct to escape, Ann swiftly opened the door and stood in the frame, a black silhouette against the luminous gray. She swung toward him in crisp indignation. "But you think I am married! —How can you talk to me about love?" A black gulf yawned before her, and she shrank back from it in bewildered fright. In the flurry of her panic she retreated through the open door, and stepped unexpectedly out into the rain. She looked back at Avezzana with entreating eyes. "Please," she begged piteously, "won't you get the horse?"

The Italian did not hesitate; for, according to his code, the moment had come when pursuit was no longer possible. He only gave her a stricken look as he passed her, just outside the door. . . . When he was gone, Ann stood where she was, regardless of the fine drizzle from which the overhanging eaves inadequately protected her; she was entirely preoccupied with the tumult of her sensations. Avezzana, she knew, was somehow dangerous, but she did not determine whether this recognition came from her actual experience with him, or merely from the fact

that he was strangely disquieting. She was only sure that her breath caught unevenly in her throat, as she had never known it to do before.

He returned much more quickly than she had expected; he came running across the little yard that lay between the shed and the house, and Ann knew at once that something had happened. "Your people are just here," he called,—"at the next house. I see them across the fields,—men and women. There is a wagon, too, with 'U. S. San. Com.' painted on it."

Relief flashed radiantly across Ann's face. "Let us go quickly, and see."

Avezzana came up to her. "You must go alone," he said. "You need never say that I was with you,—since yesterday. . . . I must take the horse, and leave you at once."

"You are going back to the battle?"

Avezzana held out his hand and nodded. "Good-by," he said, smiling with somber eyes.

The girl put her hand in his, trustfully enough now that there was familiar companionship only a field away. "I can't thank you," she murmured.

The young man said nothing at all, but he looked at her with tragic eyes, which somehow made her think of an actor's, and after a moment he kissed the hand he held, swiftly and not too impersonally. Ann continued to stand looking after him, while he lead the horse from the shed, and, with a wave of his hand to her, mounted, after the Italian method,—a spirited leap from the ground to the saddle. The horse reared

protestingly, while Avezzana reined him in, and spoke encouragingly to him; he was very beautiful in his triumphant mastery. He was almost at the gate, when Ann sprang after him.

"Wait," she called. "Please wait!"

He turned the plunging horse toward her, but she could see that he was anxious to be gone. "What is it that you wish?" he asked. His impatience was tender, but evident.

She ran lightly over to him, and came as near to the fidgeting horse as she might. "There is something I must tell you," she said urgently. "I am not married to Hendricks!"

Avezzana's face gleamed down on her, frozen with astonishment. "To whom, then?"

"To no one. I am—just a girl. I wanted you to know."

From the house down the lane there came a friendly hail, and the young Italian started. "It is, then, all the more reason why I should not be found here," he said, true to his code. "But—*a rivederci, Signorina.*"

In a moment he had disappeared around the bend in the little lane, where the insistent guns were calling.

CHAPTER XXII

EN ROUTE

WHEN the battle was over, the Sanitary Commission unit which Ann joined moved into the town of Gettysburg, and with great difficulty the girl managed to get a message through to New York announcing Hendricks' well-being. The result was as she had feared, a bombardment of telegrams from Mrs. Cortlandt clamoring for her immediate return, but as there were not nearly enough nurses at the front, and as at last she was where she had for so long wanted to be, Ann ignored the summons. The wounded crowded the churches, as well as every house in the town; they lay on boards stretched over the pews, without comforts or adequate nursing. Ann thought she had, in the past two years, learned all about the misery of the wounded soldier, but she had known nothing like the suffering she found here. Thousands on thousands of young men, many of them boys no older than she, lay shattered; yet every day the invalid population of the gruesome town increased, as ambulances brought always more men back from the battle-field, and every day they died by hundreds. It was no wonder that Ann disregarded Mrs. Cortlandt's messages.

She was put to work in an operating-room; sometimes she mopped the floor, where blood spread like a crimson lake, and sometimes she forced stimulants be-

tween white and icy lips, endeavoring to snatch men back to life when they were already in the grasp of death himself. When she came in or went out she passed, by the door, a great heap of severed arms and legs, white, stark and terrible. She worked all day and far into the night, and she was so tired that her sensibilities were mercifully dulled. Her feet ached, her back ached, her eyes ached, her very soul ached, as she beheld the courage of her suffering soldiers. She wondered that they could want to live when in such supreme pain; she felt that those who did must be reserved for some splendid fate.

Days ran on, and Ann worked until she could scarcely stand; great circles drew themselves under her eyes; her only gown was bedraggled and always wet, and her hands became rough and sore, yet she was magnificently content. Never in all her life before had she been so sure that she was doing the right thing, and she was determined to stay until the crisis was over. Unfortunately, however, Mrs. Cortlandt knew a colonel, and she was not a woman to let privilege lie idle; a week after the battle ended the girl was officially ordered home. The kind old man was quite firm when she pleaded with him, in spite of the fact that he had a pleasing twinkle in his eye.

The blow was somewhat softened by the fact that the Sanitary Commission was sending trains of wounded to the North as fast as the railroad could handle them, and Ann was detailed as a nurse in transit, in charge of a car. She was so busy getting

her patients on board, hobbling about on aching feet, in an endeavor to make them comfortable, that she left Gettysburg without so much as a final glance down the street on which she had marched to adventure. Her patients were all convalescent, and by the time the train started they were quite happily established on their cots, in high anticipation of getting home.

As the train swung around the curve, with a great slatting and jolting of loose link couplings, Ann glanced idly back at the village, and, for the first time in days, remembered the romantic Italian who had taken charge of her in the midst of the battle. In the absorption of her work in the hospital, she had entirely forgotten him, but now she was sorry that she had not seen him again. She felt very grateful to him, now she came to think about it, and as she recalled his gallantries she smiled condoningly.

They had gone perhaps fifteen miles on their way, when the door at the forward end of the car opened, and a group of officers, headed by a colonel, came in. It was a tour of inspection, Ann thought, and she looked nervously over her car to see that everything was in order. She could hear the colonel's voice above the rattle of the train, as he explained the government's system in transporting its wounded, and she looked up, curiously, to see to whom he was giving this information. There were half a dozen officers in baggy Federal uniforms, surrounding a slim young man in a braided coat. Something about his back made Ann's breath catch in her throat; she had already

flushed when he turned and, over the cots of the wounded men, met her beaming eyes. It was Avezzana.

The girl's inclination was to run down the car to greet him, and to tell every one how wonderfully kind he had been to her, but to her amazement there was no returning smile in his look. His eyes met hers coldly and firmly, and there was a prohibition in them. She stopped where she was, and her flush died away, leaving her rather pale. She did not look up again as the men went through the car, but she could hear the Italian's soft voiced felicitations.

"In my country we do nothing so excellent for our wounded. It will greatly interest the war ministry."

They stood for a while gravely discussing hospital equipment, and whether or not the use of chloroform on a large scale was practicable, and then they went away. Avezzana departed without a single backward look; the only time his eyes had met Ann's was in that first icy glance. The girl was furiously angry with him, and bewildered, too. At the very moment when the door opened she had been thinking of him with gratitude, and when she realized that it was he who had come into her car, her heart had quickened its beat with a joyousness she had not known for a long time. She could not imagine why he should pretend that he did not know her; as she thought of it her indignation grew, and at the same time she was enormously cast down.

It was, perhaps, half an hour before the door

opened again, furtively. Her car was on the end of the train, and it was, she supposed, only a brakeman coming to attend to his work, but as no one entered immediately, she became suspicious. She thought that if it was Avezzana she would not speak to him; a flame of anger swept through her, but she could not take her eyes from the narrow crack in the door, through which the scorching wind rushed devastatingly. In a moment the young Italian stuck his head into the car and startled her with a brilliant smile. She hastily turned her head away, but somehow she was aware that he slipped around the door, and closed it behind him with a little burlesque of caution. In no time at all he was beside her, masculine and impressive, and Ann was, after all, unprepared for him. She could see that the sick men looked up eagerly, and one of them, catching her eyes, grinned impishly at her. She wondered nervously what Avezzana would say, but she was taken entirely unaware by his opening.

"Nurse, may I ask you some questions in regard to the feeding of your sick?"

She shook her head. "I am afraid not," she said dryly.

"But your colonel said it was you I should ask. . . . I thought if you would come, for a moment, —so that, of course, we shall not disturb your patients, —to the back platform? . . . We do not have them in my country,—so quaint,—a place for conversation, is it not? You will come?"

"No, thank you." Still Ann did not look at him.

She was enjoying herself; she felt delightfully cruel, and at the same time unsatiated.

Avezzana reached for a chair, and drew it close to hers. "In that case," he said, "I must ask you certain questions here."

"We can not talk. There are men sleeping. . . . What questions?" The afterthought was a weakness, and she flushed resentfully.

"Many. . . . Where shall I begin?" He swung the chair between his trim legs, preparatory to sitting on it.

Ann looked miserably down the line of cots: the men were, obviously, waiting happily for the situation to develop. She glanced briefly at Avezzana and took in his malicious smile; she did not know what he would say, and, apart from that, she had a growing desire to say some things herself. "You are right," she murmured, "here we will disturb my patients. . . . For just a moment—" She rose, and turned to the rear door.

Avezzana had it open for her, although she had made haste, in order to avoid accepting even this small service. She stepped out on the platform, where the fierce wind tore at her great hollow skirts, and came near to upsetting her. She flung out her hands to seize something to which she might hold, and found herself clinging to the Italian, while the door slammed behind them, with a great clatter of glass. She met his intent eyes, and tried to pull herself away, but could not, because her arm was held in a close clasp.

"Please!" she said feebly, all her defiance shattered by this unexpected happening.

"In one moment," Avezzana replied, and he piloted her across the perilous open platform to the steps at the side. "Sit here," he said ceremoniously, as he lowered her down carefully to the narrow swinging seat. There the flying ground seemed very close; she could see each distinct pebble on the right-of-way. Her skirts filled all the space between the hand-rails, but Avezzana made nothing of that; he swung himself past her, so that she held her breath lest he should fall; then, unceremoniously pushing aside her crinoline, he seated himself on the step below her. Wedged into that tiny place, she could not avoid looking into his wide, smiling, black eyes. She had never seen eyes just like them; beneath their smile they were curiously unexpressive, as though they had no depths. With an effort, she looked away, and remembered that she was offended. She frowned as she realized, too late, that she had lost ground in allowing him to bring her out from the car.

"Can you not understand?" The Italian's voice was beautifully soft, with a chopping accent that made his English foreign.

"What do you mean—understand?"

"You are angry?"

"Of course I am angry!" Ann's direct gaze met his, firmly.

"Because I do not speak to you.—Is it not so?" Ann said nothing, but she looked off over the unfenced

fields with cold indifference. "You do not know why I am silent? No? It is of a strangeness, your country! Here you are, young, unmarried,—a lady." Was there, Ann wondered, the least question in his voice? "You spend a night with me, alone. It is not to be helped, no, but surely it is not to speak of,—for I, too, am a gentleman!"

"But what of it?" Ann burst out. "Why not talk about it? No one would think anything of it," she looked him over magnificently, "with me."

Avezzana said nothing for a bit; he was plainly staggered. Finally he announced firmly, "I could not have recognize you, before those men, no, not if I died for it. . . . It may be they, too, are innocents. . . . It is difficult to know, in your country, —but no,—I could not have spoke. . . . You understand? You forgive?"

Ann softened unwillingly. She still cherished a slight feeling of resentment, but she allowed a memory of his care of her to overlay it. "I suppose so," she said ungraciously, but she smiled at him, with all the effect of the sun coming out from under a dark cloud.

Avezzana smiled back, and all was well. "There are some things I must ask you."

"About the feeding of my patients?" Ann laughed, and he joined her unwillingly. He did not, she thought, like to laugh.

"No," he then said quite gravely. "About you."

"Well, what about me?"

"Many things. . . . Why were you there,—at the battle?"

"We had word that my cousin, Hendricks Renneslyer, was dead, and then we heard he wasn't. I went to make sure."

"Your cousin?"

Ann could feel herself flushing, but she managed to nod carelessly.

Then Avezzana said something that surprised her. "I have seen him since. When I knew it was necessary for me to see you again, I went to him. He says you are fiance."

"We were,—but we're not,—now."

"Then why risk all, in this way? Surely, even in your country, it is not the custom for a beautiful young girl to—" He broke off, with a wide gesture.

"You talk just like my aunts," she commented.

A pleased smile broke over the Italian's face. "Ah, you have aunts?" There was plainly relief in his tone.

"I should say I have! Two."

"And that is all?"

"It's enough, thank you!"

"I mean—no mother? No father?"

"No. . . . I have an uncle; he is the nicest person in the world, but he is abroad. The president sent him to Europe."

Avezzana seemed to be struggling with extraordinary facts. "The president," he murmured, as if that were the last touch to an amazing situation.

"I am sorry he isn't here. He would thank you for me," Ann said prettily.

"You will tell him?"

"Yes."

"*Extraordinaire!* And your aunts?"

Ann flushed again. "No,—not my aunts. They would be awfully cross about it."

Avezzana's look of relief deepened into deference. "Your aunts,—I hope to know them," he murmured.

The train swung around a curve; at the end where the two young people sat the car swayed dizzily. Avezzana clung to the railing, and the girl caught tight to his arm. As they settled back she became conscious of a slight feeling of restraint. "I must go," she said uneasily.

"To nurse? . . . But why a nurse,—you, a young girl? That is a thing I can not comprehend."

"Plenty of people can't," she assured him comfortingly, and added superbly, "I nurse because I wish to. . . . In a war. . . . Don't your Italian women do that?"

"Women? Yes. But ladies, never."

"Well, I am glad I don't live there, that's all."

Avezzana leaned toward her eagerly. "Do not turn your mind against my country," he pleaded. "Italia! How she is beautiful!"

"Perhaps when the war is over, uncle will take me there."

"Where do you write to your uncle?"

"In care of the American Minister, Paris. Why?"

Avezzana looked at her profoundly. "Perhaps,—for no reason," he said. Ann felt, uncomfortably, that there was more there than met the eye.

"Now I really must go back," she said; "suppose some one should come in, and not find me?"

This was, to Avezzana, potent reasoning. He rose at once, and slipped past her, up the steps. She got unsteadily to her feet, and allowed him to take her hand in his. He held it very tightly, but relinquished it the moment he had the door opened. On the threshold, Ann paused, swaying lightly to the motion of the train.

"When you are in New York, will you come to see us?" she demanded.

"I shall give myself that honor."

"But you don't know where we live."

"Your cousin,—he has give me the place." He pulled a corner of folded white paper from his breast pocket, in proof.

"Oh! . . . Well, then, good-by." She gave him her hand again impulsively, and vanished into the car. Avezzana stayed where he was, until they came to the station; she could see the back of his sleek black head, whenever she turned toward the door, but when they arrived in Harrisburg, he had vanished.

The next day Ann left the Sanitary Commission women, and went on to New York. As she crossed on the ferry she was uncomfortably aware that probable condemnation awaited her in Washington Square, but after all she didn't much care. She felt

singularly light-hearted, now that the great affair of Hendricks was settled. Mrs. Cortlandt was waiting for her in the ferry-house; she received the prodigal without the slightest indication of an inclination to sacrifice a fatted calf,—or, indeed, anything, except the offender herself. During all the years in which she had shocked her, Ann had never known such weighty disapprobation. "Well, miss," was all she said in welcome. She ran a disapproving eye over the girl's disgraceful frock. "You look a sight," she added grimly.

"I know,—my old black dress. . . . Isn't it wonderful, Aunt Emily, about Hendricks?"

"What about Hendricks?"

"Why,—that he is alive, and all right?"

"We knew that long before your message came."

"You knew?"

"Certainly. The very day after you left we had a telegram in answer to those we had been sending."

Ann stood still, in the passageway. "How ridiculous!" she murmured, and laughed.

"I am glad you can laugh, miss. It is as well for you that your uncle is away from home, or he might at last see things as they are. Don't stand here; let us get home while we may."

Outside, the streets seemed to Ann to be strangely empty. Ordinarily little negro bootblacks and paper boys stood about the entrance to the ferry, and crowds of people swarmed in and out of the building, but to-day scarcely any one was to be seen.

"Where is everybody?" she asked Mrs. William.

"Come, Ann, make haste! Don't stand there, like that! Don't you see those roughs over there?"

"What of it? It can't hurt me to have them look at me. . . . I am sure I shouldn't think they would want to, the way I look."

Mrs. Cortland broke into a hen-like little run, and Ann hobbled after her on her aching feet. The carriage was waiting; the older woman bolted into it frantically, and turned to pull Ann after her.

"What in the world, Aunt Emily?" Ann cried, half tumbling into the musty interior. "Why did you take the closed carriage? And what is the hurry?"

Mrs. Cortlandt sank back on the cushions with a great sigh of relief. "Thank goodness," she gasped. "We're safe!"

"Safe? Why shouldn't we be?" Ann glanced out of the window at the still deserted streets; the only person she could see was a shopkeeper, frantically putting shutters before his show windows in the same panic of haste that had afflicted Mrs. Cortlandt. "Is there anything the matter?" she demanded.

"Matter? I should say there was! Riots, at any moment! Negroes threatened with their lives! Every one scared to death! Roughs from the river-front swarming all over town! We shall be fortunate if we reach home with our lives!"

"But what has happened?"

"They have begun the draft for the army, Ann. Yesterday they drew the first names from the wheel.

They never should have begun it on a Saturday;—all day Sunday to stir up mischief, and no soldiers quartered here! If I were a man I am sure I should never have allowed such a thing to happen!"

Ann sat silent, letting Mrs. Cortlandt run on. She remembered that her guardian had thought the Draft Act a bad one, because, for two hundred dollars, it allowed a rich man to buy his exemption from fighting, but that, she thought, would not have caused rioting. "I don't understand," she said, at length.

"It is those Copperheads," Mrs. Cortlandt impatiently explained. "They are all Rebels, at heart, and they don't want the draft, of course; it means more men to fight on our side. They have stirred up a great feeling against the negroes, and goodness knows what will happen to the poor things! I wish your uncle was at home."

It all sounded like an extravaganza to Ann, but she echoed Mrs. Cortlandt's wish heartily. She thought that to tell her guardian all about Hendricks would be simpler than writing him. Moreover, she wanted his warm welcome, and her sure sense of his affection.

As they neared Washington Square the streets were more normal, and she decided that the danger of riots was all in Mrs. Cortlandt's head, after all. Baby carriages were being rolled up and down in the shade before the houses, and the sun lay tranquilly on the yellowing Square. Of course it was all nonsense, Ann thought, with a pitying smile for one so aged and panicky as competent, middle-aged Mrs. Cortlandt.

That night, safe in her incredibly comfortable room, and luxuriously clean and crisp in her starched white muslin dressing sack, she wrote a letter to her guardian. She sat before the candle for a long time, writing. The flame made a streak of gold along one side of her sleek little head, and down the long braid that hung over her shoulder. Now and then moths, attracted by her candle, flew in from the dim Square outside, and each time one came, she took it carefully between her fingers, and carried it to the window. Somehow, since the battle, she could not bear to see anything die unnecessarily.

It was long past midnight when she had finished her confession, and she went to stand in the window for a moment, before she blew out her candle. The neighborhood was quiet; only very far away was there a confusion of noise. A waning moon rode boisterously in a patchy sky, against which the tops of the elms in the Square made a delicate black pattern. She was exceedingly glad to be at home; the peace and comfort of it was like a gentle caress; the pain and tragedy of Gettysburg seemed a long way off. . . . She wished that she could forget it. . . . She turned to her bed, waiting, smooth and white, for her tired body. . . . Her last waking thoughts were of Avezzana,—nothing definite, only an impression of him that made her smile as she drifted out to sleep.

CHAPTER XXIII

RIOTS

THE following morning Ann slept late: the shadows in the Square were already shortening toward midday, when she came down-stairs, and she cast an impatient glance at the tall clock in the hall. It was like Mrs. William, she thought, to guard her rest without consulting her, and on the very day, too, when a boat was sailing for Europe; and it had been her intention to be up and about betimes, in order to get her letter off to Mr. Cortlandt. There was nobody in the lower rooms, and she summoned old Joseph with undeserved acerbity.

He came shuffling amiably into the library, in the comfortable undress he allowed himself on a warm July morning. Ann looked at him crossly; his white hair was somewhat disheveled, and she thought that his morning smile lacked something of its usual gleaming pleasure at his first daily sight of an employer.

"Where is everybody?" she inquired.

"Mis' Cortlandt and Miss Fanny, Miss Ann, was 'bliged to go to dey own house. . . . Mis' Cortlandt say fo' you to stay hyar until she come back ag'in. You are on no 'count to go out."

"Hum." Ann was inclined to insubordination, but remembering her recent escapades, she was prudent. "Then you'll have to take this letter to the post-office,

Joseph. There's a boat sailing with the tide to-night."

"Yes, Miss Ann." He went off readily enough, but Ann had barely time to settle down to Charles Dickens' last enchanting installment before he burst into the room again, his face a sickly lead color. He held out Ann's letter in a hand that shook.

"I cayn't go, Miss Ann."

"Can't go? Why not, pray?" In her impatience she was suddenly imperious.

"Down-stairs, Miss Ann, honey, de butcher's boy says a fierce mob am roamin' de streets, yes, ma'am, an' huntin' all us cullud folks down. . . . He do say dey's stringin' us to lamp-posts,—but I dunno,—an' shootin' us! Miss Ann, he say dey's set fire to the cullud orphan 'sylum where yo' tuk yo' clothes when yo' firs' cum here—"

"At Forty-Second Street, you mean? Right on Fifth Avenue? Nonsense!"

"Yes, Miss Ann. . . . An' all them po' little cullud chillen in it!"

"Don't be silly, Joseph. The police would never let that happen, right here in New York. What was that?" It had been a muffled, distant crash.

"Dey's firin', Miss Ann. He say dey's gone into de Draft office, an' broke dat wheel dey draws de names on, all to bits!"

"I don't believe a word of it!"

"No, ma'am. . . . I reckon I won't go out to-day, Miss Ann, honey!"

Ann made no move to take her letter; she had, when writing it, appreciated keenly that every word she put on the paper would pain her guardian, and now that it was done she wanted to be rid of it. She was afraid, if it remained in her hands, that she would lose her courage, and decide not to mail it, after all. When Joseph had gone off with it she had relaxed into a great relief. It was over, she had thought, come what might, and now, here it was back again; it was infinitely annoying. Moreover, she didn't half believe what she had heard of the riots, and she thought it possible that the old man was trying to evade his walk in the heat. She remembered that Mr. Cortlandt had complained that Joseph had grown lazy.

"Of course you will take my letter," she said crisply. "You must hurry, or it will miss the boat."

"No, Miss Ann,—no. It ain't a right healthy day fo' a cullud person to be out!" He pleaded with her as though the child he had helped to rear was omnipotent.

Ann struggled to be calm and kind. "If it doesn't go at once it will miss the boat," she explained with a careful patience, and added more briskly, "I never heard anything so absurd in my life! This end of the town is perfectly quiet. You can walk up University Place to Fourteenth Street; it won't take you ten minutes. Now hurry, Joseph, do; you'll be home all the sooner."

The old man turned slowly, hesitated, and finally shuffled out. In a moment Ann saw him emerge

cautiously into the peaceful desertion of Washington Square, and she smiled at his foolish panic, although she thought, with a touch of compunction, that there was something pathetic about his bent old back. She felt pleasantly superior to ignorant people whose fears were aroused by tales told by butchers' boys, but nevertheless she brought her book to the window, so that she might watch for his return.

Suddenly she heard again an ominous series of muffled crashes, ripped by sharper detonations. It shook her tranquillity, and she felt somewhat guilty, as she went out on the steps to listen. There she could clearly hear distant shots, and something that sounded faintly like a clamor of voices, but she could not be sure of it. She began to be uneasy about old Joseph, although she felt no real alarm.

In a few moments Fanny Cortlandt came hurrying down the Square: she looked pale and fagged, under her flopping straw hat. Seeing her friend on the steps, she called out, as she hurried toward her, "Isn't it dreadful, Ann? There is a fearful mob, killing people! Burning buildings, too! See, over there!"

Ann whirled to look. Off to the east, the clear blue of the summer sky was clouded with an angry haze. She thought of Joseph, and gasped.

"I was fortunate to get back unmolested. We have been locking up everything in our house." She came breathlessly up the steps. "Ann, they are murdering the negroes, and torturing them! Isn't it horrible!

They say one poor man— Why, Ann, where are you going?"

Ann was flinging herself down the steps. She called back, "I sent Joseph out! I'm going after him!"

Fanny sprang after her, and caught her by the arm. "Ann! Don't think of such a thing! What could you do,—a girl? And something dreadful might happen to you!"

Ann shook her off savagely. "I'm going!" she declared.

"Like that? Without any hat?"

Ann laughed. "No," she replied, "with yours!" She snatched Fanny's from her smooth head, and ran clumsily down the Square. She forgot all about her lame feet in her anxiety, for in the distance she caught a murmur of wild voices.

As she neared the corner of University Place, the confusion came louder; there was a thud of heavy feet, and a savage medley of shouts. Above the noise she heard suddenly a raucous voice calling, "Burn the nigger! Burn him!" and the sound of pounding feet came louder. Filled with sickening premonition she flung herself around the corner and stood, horror-struck. Running down the center of the street, straight toward her, was old Joseph. She had a distinct impression of his distraught gray face, and as she looked he stumbled, almost spent. Perhaps ten yards behind him there were twenty-five or thirty men and boys, in a scattering group. They could easily have caught

him; Ann could see that they were playing with him, —savoring their enjoyment of his terror. A rage that blinded her to everything else caught the girl in its fierce grip; she had no sensation of fear as she sprang forward.

"Oh," she cried, "stop! He's an old man!"

Joseph saw her, and making a last effort, he plunged toward her and fell, huddled in a shapeless heap, at her feet. She could hear the rasping gulps of his breath as he lay there. The leaders of the group fell back on each side of her, but those in the rear pushed against them with oaths, and laughter more savage than their curses. There were still vague shouts of "Kill the nigger!" but salutations to the girl almost drowned them out: "Hello, my beauty! Let the nigger be strung up, but you come with us!" For an instant Ann's mere presence held them at bay, but the pressure behind was strong, and all at once the entire group burst on them, overwhelming them. The girl and the old negro were hustled roughly into the Square.

Ann, feeling for the first time strange and compelling hands upon her, struck out with a primitive fury. The men about her fell back laughing; Fanny's hat had fallen off; she stood with her red hair bare and shining like new minted copper in the sunlight. "Let him go," she cried, taking advantage of the momentary lull. "Let me have him."

A burst of laughter greeted this plea. A man

shouted, "Give us a kiss, my dear." Then the demand to "Kill the nigger!" arose again, more fiercely.

Under the confusion of her fright, Ann began to plan, and she steadily pressed back down the Square toward Fifth Avenue and the haven of her guardian's house. She drew the little mob with her, a wild and struggling mass, and she dragged Joseph bodily, her compelling hand on his arm. Through her excitement a sense of his piteous condition penetrated poignantly.

"Let the girl have him," a voice arose unexpectedly, and the crowd stilled to hear. "Who is he, miss?"

"Why, he is just our butler." Her young voice floated out clearly; every one heard.

A great roar of laughter greeted her announcement. "Damn the rich!" some one called out. "They don't have to be drafted. They pay their dirty money for us to go and be killed." Her champion dropped out, as suddenly as he had intervened.

"Let's take the girl, too." A rough-looking youth Ann had identified as the leader caught her by the wrist, and pulled her toward him, grinning. She leaped back, ducked under his outstretched arm, and wrenched herself free. The men about her fell back, laughing and half good-natured, waiting to watch her fight. She thought that she might take advantage of this, and she tried to shake old Joseph into some vitality, so that they might attempt a dash to safety, but he was too terrified to understand. She could only drag him after her, hopelessly, so she began to

plead with the men nearest them; breathless and desperate, she begged them to have mercy. Steadily the little group, whirling on the edges, compressed in the center, bore down the Square. Here and there Ann caught a sympathetic look on a man's face and felt that she was making some headway. They were nearing her guardian's house when the leader of the mob thrust his flushed face almost against her own; without further preliminary he flung his arm about her and said briefly, "You're coming with me."

She was horribly frightened now, but this unbelievable thing was happening to her almost at the door of her guardian's home; she was surrounded by the houses of her friends, and she called loudly for help.

"Scream,—go on, do," the man taunted her. "There is no one in town can stop us. Give me a kiss, my girl!"

Ann pushed him off feebly; her heart was beating sickeningly, and she had almost stopped struggling, when all at once she was conscious of a new element in the crowd. There was confusion on its edge; some one was hitting out wildly. In a moment she could see that a man was pushing toward her; his fierce attack had opened a wide lane in the tight pressed group and almost before she realized that he was there, he was at her side; he was white and breathless, but she had a heartening realization of his courage.

"Is there a decent man in this gang?" he shouted. "Stand by me, boys!" Two or three shamefaced volunteers pushed their way to his side. "That's the

ticket!" He turned to Ann. "Let the nigger go," he said briefly.

She looked at him with wide and desperate eyes. "I won't," she said. "That is my house, just there. Can't we make it?"

He cast a brief glance at the distance. "Run for it," he ordered, as with a savage kick he helped the limp negro to regain his agility.

Ann thrust her arm through the old man's. Her courage and her strength came flooding back to her with the opportunity to escape. Joseph rolled desperate eyes around him, and then, seeing that he was so near home and safety, he tore himself from her grasp and ran. The basement door was open, with Fanny's frightened face behind it, and the fugitives fell into the house, safe. The rioters flung themselves against the stout oak door as the bolt shot into place. Ann wasted no time on Fanny, who, terrified and half fainting, seized her convulsively. She brushed her aside with the panic-stricken cook, and ran tumultuously up the basement steps.

"Where are you going?" Fanny called after her, terrified.

Ann paused for an instant. "You stand by the door," she directed. "That man out there,—he saved my life!—Let him in when he comes." And without waiting for an answer she hurried on, lame, breathless, and often stumbling, up the long, cruelly steep stairs to her uncle's room. There, in the drawer of the table by Mr. Cortlandt's bed, she found what she wanted.

It was a revolver, blue black and heavy in her hand. She was breathing so hard that she had to wait for just an instant before she opened the window in the balcony overhanging the Square. Down below her the fight was still going on; the dust arose about it in clouds, half obliterating the combatants. For a moment she could not see her protector, and cold terror gripped her until she discovered him, where the knot of men was thickest. The attack on the door had been abandoned for the more exciting event of mauling the girl's champion.

Ann had never fired a revolver, and her hands were trembling so that even when she used both, the long muzzle swept the crowd in wide curves. "If I shoot straight, I shall probably kill him," she reflected grimly, as she pulled very hard indeed, and managed to fire. The revolver kicked, and the charge went high over the heads of the rioters; the report seemed to her louder even than those that had burst about her at Gettysburg. It had an instantly calming effect. There was a general tendency to fall back, and every face turned toward her as she stood, armed, in her balcony. Her unknown champion took advantage of the lull to shake off his assailants, and to push toward the house. She did not dare fire down into the crowd for fear of hitting him; so she waited. Stones began to fall about her; she dodged a particularly vicious one and heard the window behind her crash into bits. The crowd was recovering from its panic, and she peered over the balcony to see what was

happening to her protector. He was just below her, engaging two or three of the roughs at once, but obviously losing ground, so she fired again, deliberately, directly down into the crowd. No one seemed to be hurt, but she could not be sure, so she leaned over the rail to look. In her agitation she dropped her pistol and it crashed heavily into the upturned face of the young leader of the rioters; he went down without a sound, and his followers drew back. Ann saw the stranger leap for the basement door and heard it slam behind him. A shower of stones fell about her and she was conscious of a sharp pain in her hand as she ducked down hastily and went back through the window into the house, where the terrified servants were closing shutters behind the shattered windows. The whole neighborhood echoed with the sounds of blows upon the doors. It was fortunate for the fugitives that this was the first day of mob fighting; when confronted with the actual demolishing of property, the leaders hung back, and a more peaceably inclined man on the outskirts urged that the house belonged to Hendricks Cortlandt, "him who built the Old Folk's Home."

The leader staggered up unsteadily; Mr. Cortlandt's revolver lay at his feet. He looked at it covetously and then picked it up; it was not a bad prize to have won.

"Well," he said, "even the rich ain't all alike. We'll let this nigger go, and get us another one somewhere else."

The women, palpitating at a crack in the shutters, could scarcely believe their eyes when they saw the crowd move off. They had all expected the worst.

In the meantime Ann's champion lay where he had fallen when he had staggered into the house. From one blue trousers leg a bright red stain was slowly spreading, wet and ominous. When Ann came down the stairs and saw him, she gasped sharply and the color went out of her lips. "Did I shoot him?" she asked, agonized.

The man managed to lift his head. "Don't you fret," he murmured. "It's an old wound. I'm just out of hospital." Then he dropped again, and lay, limp and white, on the basement floor.

Ann sent Fanny flying for her guardian's whisky, and the cook to boil water for bottles to put at her new patient's feet, while she cut away his blood soaked trousers leg. She found that the bleeding came from a gash above the knee, which was only half healed, and had, obviously, reopened; it was a comparatively simple matter for her to stop the bleeding, and to dress the wound with towels torn into strips. The stranger did not regain consciousness, but his pulse was fairly strong, so when she had finished with his dressings Ann risked moving him to the bedroom floor. She routed old Joseph from the cellar, where, on regaining his safety, he had taken refuge, and the old man and the women managed to carry the limp body of Ann's rescuer up-stairs to the guest room, where

the cook cut his clothes away, and dressed him in a nightshirt of Mr. Cortlandt's.

When Ann bent over him she found something hauntingly familiar in his lean face, bearded only sparsely, and well below the high cheek-bones; she thought that she might have seen him in a hospital somewhere. She gave him a tablespoonful of whisky and in a moment he opened his eyes and looked at her. He smiled and his lips parted. She bent to hear, impersonally, as she had so often done in the hospitals.

"Annie Byrne," the young man murmured, pleased. And then, "Kiss me again, Annie, do!"

CHAPTER XXIV

HENDRICKS AND PETER

ANN closed the guest room door behind her with a careful hand, for almost immediately after his recognition of her, her patient had dropped into a profound sleep. She knew him, too, now, and chuckled to herself at the extraordinary turns her life took. She faced on the threshold, a transfigured Fanny. The gentle creature's eyes blazed; her lips were dead white.

"Ann," she demanded, "when did you kiss that man?" The hostility in her low voice made Ann look at her in amazement.

"What man?" her uncertainty was genuine.

"Oh!" murmured Fanny, "don't you even notice it when you kiss a man,—and you engaged to Hendricks?"

Ann laughed; in her relief at her escape and her champion's safety, she felt extraordinarily light-hearted, and possibly a little light-headed, too. "We can eliminate Hendricks," she said carelessly.

Fanny put out her hands in a touchingly blind gesture. They gripped a chair-back hard, while her eyes never left Ann's face. "What do you mean?" she whispered, an uplift of hope trembling in her voice.

"It is all over between Hendricks and me, Fanny. I have written to tell him so."

"Oh," cried Fanny, indignation engulfing every

other sensation. "You have jilted him!—Jilted Hendricks while he is at the front!"

Ann nodded soberly. "Yes," she said, "and a good thing for him, too."

She had been wondering how she could make her case so that the relations would understand, and suddenly Fanny said the whole thing in five shattering words, "You have never loved him!"

"No," Ann confessed flatly. She added, in quick entreaty, "But, oh, Fanny,—I've tried to!"

"Tried to," repeated Fanny, wondering, "tried to—love Hendricks." Her dove's eyes were starry.

"It was no good, I couldn't make myself."

"I suppose there is no more use trying to make one's self love,—than there is to try to stop loving," the other commented simply.

"Fanny," Ann ventured, her eyes filled with unaccustomed tears, "I've been so unhappy!"

Fanny's soft heart almost betrayed her. "You must have been," she said gently. Her hand fluttered toward Ann's. Just in time she snatched it back. "But Hendricks!" she cried. "How unhappy he will be!"

"Not really," Ann protested. "I would have made him miserable, if we had married. . . . I am everything he doesn't approve of. You know that, Fanny! Even if I had gone on pretending all my life, he wouldn't have been satisfied. Hendricks should marry some one entirely different from me,—some one softer, gentler,—some one who wouldn't shock him,—or demand things he hasn't of him,—some one very

yielding and sweet,—some one like—like you, Fanny!" Suddenly she took in the other's tremulous confusion: her eyes widened as they dwelt on the other girl's crimsoning face. "Fanny Cortlandt," she cried, "you are in love with him yourself!"

Fanny's little hands crept up over her telltale cheeks. All her pitiful defenses were stormed. "I couldn't help it, Ann," she murmured miserably.

Ann looked at her in wonder; an unwilling admiration for her friend's steadfastness was borne in upon her. "In love like that," she marveled, "and with Hendricks!"

Fanny flared at once. "You mustn't speak of him in that way! He is too good for you! It's he who should have jilted you, Ann Byrne!"

Ann nodded humbly. "I wish he had," she said, and sighed. "It would have been so much simpler."

"Do you love any one else?"

Quite unbidden Ann's mind leaped to Avezzana; for an instant she had a clear vision of his slim figure, and his disquieting gaze. "I don't know," she said, confused.

Fanny jerked her head toward the door. "That private? That man in there?"

Ann laughed. "Peter?"

"Is that his name?"

"It is all I know of his name. I used to go to school with him in Milton Center, but I haven't seen him since." She disposed of him thus lightly.

"He saved your life," Fanny interposed sternly.

"I know. He was awfully brave. But almost all men are brave, Fanny. War makes you realize that."

Fanny nodded; it was impossible for her to remain disapproving. Her shining eyes betrayed her sudden joyousness, and Ann laughed as she flung her long arms about her and kissed her. They each drew back from this unaccustomed caress, embarrassed, all at once, by the complete frankness of their understanding.

Suddenly a bell pealed through the house and Ann ran to lean over the stair rail. "I think Joseph is afraid to go," she called back to Fanny. The bell rang again, a quick impatient jangle, and she gathered her floating skirts about her. "See if it waked him," she said, nodding over her shoulder at the wounded man's room, and as Fanny started to obey her, she ran down to open the door.

She could see, outlined against the clouded glass pane, a shape that was somehow familiar. There was something about it that made her vaguely uneasy,—perhaps it was the set of the military cap which disturbed her,—but she was in no way prepared for the revelation she had when she opened the door. "Hendricks!" she gasped, clinging weakly to the big silver knob. And Hendricks it was, big, impressive, and quite evidently indignant.

"Well, Ann?" he boomed at her, startled at her sudden appearance. "I wonder that you can look me in the face."

"Hendricks,—here in New York! Come in; we shall all be so glad to see you!" She was talking

nervously, and pulling him toward the library. She wanted to settle with him before Fanny knew that he was there, for she guessed that a scene was inevitable. She was not surprised when he pulled the library door to behind him, with a crash that shook the house.

"You've had my note," she said.

"Yes! That's why I'm here, taking a leave at a time like this!" he stormed. "Ann!" he looked at her, shrinking, guilty and sorry, and his wrath melted. "Say you didn't mean it, Ann," he pleaded.

"I wish I could, Hendricks! Oh, my dear, I wish I could, but I am through with pretending! I don't love you, Hendricks. I wish I did, but I don't."

"But I love you so much."

"I know. I don't see how you can. You hate everything I do, you know, Hendricks."

"But I've always thought that I would change all that, once we were married."

"It wouldn't have happened that way."

"I don't care. You can do anything you want, Ann, if you won't throw me over."

"It is no use, Hendricks. I hate myself, but that doesn't make me love you."

Suddenly all Hendricks' stalwart masculine impressiveness broke up before the girl's startled gaze. He looked at her with eyes which were quite obviously filling with tears, and as he swung sharply away, a great sob horrified her. She clenched her hands tight to keep from comforting him, as he stood with his

head down on his arm, at the empty fireplace. "I am sorry," she kept repeating futilely. "I'm so sorry."

It seemed a long time before he straightened, and faced her with more dignity than he had ever shown her. "What am I going to do with my life?" he demanded. He blew his nose with a desperation that was somehow not at all ludicrous.

"Wonderful things, Hendricks!" She had a flashing memory of him at Gettysburg. "Brave things!"

Hendricks, too, had a vision of battle, and the seeking, questing, slaughter. "Thank God I have to go back," he said gloomily.

This was too much for Ann. She ran to him, and clasped both her hands about his arm. "Don't talk like that!" she cried. "Don't!"

Hendricks looked down steadily at her lifted face. "I can't help kissing you if you do that," he said.

Swiftly she released her hold, flung her arms about his neck, and drew his face down to hers. She kissed him, with tender lips. "That's for good-by," she whispered, and he whispered in return, "You never were so sweet."

It was terrible: it was beyond her worst dreams of parting. She struggled to hold fast to her resolve; she recalled, wildly, a gaze as desperate and more darkly compelling; she remembered Fanny. . . . Fanny! "Hendricks," she said eagerly, "listen to me. There is something I must tell you."

"Don't tell me that you love some one else!" He put up his arm as if to fend off a blow.

"No. Some one else loves you."

"Some one loves me? What of it?"

"This;—she adores you! She has always loved you, Hendricks! If I had never stumbled into your life you would have married her, I know. She is so sweet, so pretty! I don't see how you could ever have looked at me, when she was here." She cast about her for a compelling reason to bring interest to Hendricks' dull eyes. "She loves you so much," she ended flatly.

"Who does?" he asked impatiently.

"Fanny."

"Fanny? Nonsense! Fanny! You must be mistaken, Ann. . . . Poor little Fanny! She has always been fond of me, I know,—but love? Well, well,—Fanny!"

Ann ached to be away from this atmosphere of desperate renunciation. "Think it over, Hendricks," she said crisply, and, taking advantage of his bewilderment, she slipped into the hall and closed the door behind her with a heartening sensation of relief. "That's done," she said clearly.

She stood for a moment, listening, and then she turned to the stairs and her forgotten patient.

She found Fanny seated by the bed, endeavoring to make trivial conversation with the raw-boned stranger, and obviously glad to see her. In spite of all her kindness Fanny could never carry off a conversation with no foundations. "Who was it?" she asked.

Ann hesitated for an instant. "It is some one to see you."

"To see me? A caller, and the city in this state? Who is it, Ann?"

"I don't know. You had better go down."

The girl rose, somewhat flustered. She looked down at her spreading pink checked skirts. "Am I all right?" she demanded.

"Yes. . . . Wait a moment." Ann tucked in a stray lock of Fanny's smooth hair. "You look sweet," she murmured.

Her friend flushed brilliantly. "Don't be silly," she reproved her, with abashed eyes, as she stole away. Ann, listening, could hear the light tap tap of her heels as she hurried down the hall.

Peter lay looking at her with eager eyes. Meeting them, she dragged herself back from the engrossing solution of her personal problem, and went to sit beside him. . . . He was good-looking, in spite of his rough beard, she decided, as his stern face softened in a welcoming smile.

"Annie," he murmured. "Well, well!"

"How strange that it should have been you who saved me, Peter."

"Strange? I don't know: I have always thought about you a lot, anyway."

"You have?"

"Yes. You see your mother's marriage was the most interesting thing that ever happened in Milton

Center. I was coming over here to take a look at the house where you lived, when you—happened along."

"Are you badly hurt? I can't send the servants for a doctor with the streets in this condition, but I'll go myself, if you need one."

Peter's chin, already noticeable, squared itself aggressively above his sheets. "You keep off the streets," he said definitely. "I'm all right! I haven't got my strength back, that's all, and somebody kicked my bad leg."

"I'm sorry. It was all my fault. You must stay here until you are well again. How long a leave have you?"

"Indefinite. I can't go back. They say I'll always limp, if I walk much."

"What a pity."

"Yes, I'd like to see the fighting through, of course."

"You need a good rest, just out of hospital."

Peter nodded. "I've never loafed in my life, but now I'm planning to go to Milton Center to stay with my sister until I'm fit to work again. . . . It's four years since I've been back there."

"Where do you live?"

"Chicago. I was running a machine shop out there when the war began. Got it paid for, too,—and was just beginning to make a little money of my own. . . . Kind of hard luck. . . . But I can pick up my business when I go back. I've managed to keep the rent up out of my army pay."

"What does one do in a machine shop, Peter?"

Peter laughed. "A little of everything. Mending things, mostly. I used to do that before I left Milton Center. I worked for a while in the blacksmith shop there, and I kept that sewing-machine you sent Mrs. Allen the first Christmas after you went, in order. I suppose if I fixed it once I fixed it a hundred times," he added reflectively.

"That's a funny business,—mending."

"Well, I make things too,—invent 'em."

"You had better talk to uncle about that. Sometimes he buys inventions."

"He won't buy mine! I'm goin' to have the fun of developing my own ideas. I'd be further along now, except I've had responsibilities. My mother was sick for years, an' then my sister's husband turned out wrong, an' I've had her and her little girl, but he was killed at Fredericksburg, an' left her with life insurance,—not much, but enough. My mother died last year, and I'm free for the first time in my life, free, and in a growing town."

"It sounds exciting. If I had stayed in Milton Center I should have been sorry I wasn't a man, so that I might have worked with you."

"If you had stayed in Milton Center I should probably be sorry you weren't a man, too. I've got no time to fall in love."

Ann laughed, but she flushed under this backhanded compliment.

"You have never been back?" Peter asked.

"To Milton Center? No."

"Kind of mean of you." Ann looked at him questioningly. "Mrs. Allen thought a sight of you and your mother."

"I suppose she did."

"Of course everybody knows that you, or your rich relations, sent her money every month, but she'd have enjoyed a sight of you before she died. She used to talk about you sometimes to me; I liked to hear about the way you lived. This man Cortlandt is the kind of man I'm going to be, some day."

Ann laughed involuntarily. "Like Uncle Hendricks?" she cried incredulously.

A dull red burned on Peter's hollow cheeks. "You wait and see," was all he said.

CHAPTER XXV

COMPANIONSHIP

PETER SMITH remained almost a month in the Washington Square house, as Mrs. Cortlandt refused to let him go until he was entirely recovered. She made a great fuss over him, professing that he had saved, not merely Ann, but also her own Fanny, and, incidentally, the entire Cortlandt house and possessions, from the violence of the mob. She had his leg attended to by the best doctor in New York, and she fed him up with dainties until his lean cheeks took on a softer outline.

She sat for hours by his bedside, talking condescendingly to him about things of which he knew nothing, and at dinner she would say to the two girls, "The most amazing thing about the war is the way it makes people democratic!" She was, nevertheless, inclined to keep rather a rigid chaperonage over Fanny's and Ann's interviews with the invalid. "You never can tell," she said wisely to them, "with people like that."

For the first few days Peter was in the house, Ann slept most of the time. Gettysburg left her exhausted; all she wanted to do was to lie, placid, happy and utterly relaxed, between her cool linen sheets. When she was about again, the riots were a thing of the past, and Hendricks had returned to his regiment. Her life was

suddenly drained of excitement. The family doctor, who had advised a week in bed, now insisted on a vacation from her work in the hospitals, and for once Ann was willing to obey. She had literally nothing to do, and was glad of it, as she felt strangely languid and foolishly content. She liked to talk to Peter; she had an extraordinary sense of kinship with him. Perhaps it was because of their bond of early association, —no one else knew the surroundings from which she had sprung,—or possibly it was a deeper thing than that, a mutual recognition of fundamental qualities in each other. She found that she was able to talk to him of her work in the hospitals, and of all that ghastly week at Gettysburg, with a freedom she had before known only when with her guardian. In return he told her all about the war from a private soldier's viewpoint—a vastly different war, Ann found, than it was when seen through the eyes of an officer. . . . They talked of her mother, too. It seemed that Peter retained the clearest memory of her sweet perfection; that she had been a sort of fairy princess to him, in his little boyhood.

"The day we heard her boat had sunk," he told Ann, "I hid up in the hayloft, and cried. . . . It's the last time I ever did such a thing."

"I wish I had known that, down here in New York. It would have helped a lot."

"It's a good thing you left Milton Center," Peter assured her. "There's nothing there for any one with

a scrap of ambition. It isn't big enough. I'm glad I got out when I did; I was getting on all right, but, you see, there was a limit to it. . . . There's no limit in Chicago,—not yet. . . . In the beginning out there, I had a pretty hard time to get on my feet, but I was never sorry I went, even when I was hungry. A man has a chance in Chicago: I'll be a big man before I get through out there. You'll see."

He thrust his head forward. There was an eager, seeking look in his eyes; he might have been a poet hailing an inspiration, and, so stimulated, he was suddenly glorified. Ann realized, all at once, that she had been wrong in thinking him a plain man. There was beauty in the lift of his head, and in the wistful lines of his jaw. He recalled vividly the little boy she had known; he brought her childhood before her, and it became momentarily a vital part of her life. She smiled tremulously into his lit eyes, and he started violently. Lost in his dream, he had forgotten all about her.

"You care very much, don't you?" she asked gently.

He laughed, with sudden harshness. *"Care?* That's a soft word. I'm—ambitious, I suppose; I'm determined to get out of the kind of life I've lived. I'm going to work hard enough to earn the right to have other men work for me, and then I'll do something big. . . . If this war had come ten years later, do you think I'd have been a private? No,—I'd have outfitted a company and gone in a captain,

like your Renneslyer. . . . In the ranks! . . . I'm going to get out of the ranks, do you hear me, —clear out, in front of 'em."

"Well, don't shout so. It's too hot." Ann's voice was cool, but her gray eyes rested softly on him. She liked the fine sweep of his ambition. "I wonder," she said, "what I'll be doing, while you're getting rich and powerful."

Peter broke off in mid-flight; his look of inspiration suddenly drooped, and his eyes were hungry as they searched her face. "Oh," he said, "you'll be marrying some lucky man."

"I suppose so." Her voice was indifferent; the prospect seemed remote.

Peter talked no more that afternoon; instead he lay very still, watching Ann with somber eyes. For once, she welcomed Mrs. Cortlandt, when that lady came bustling in.

When the invalid began to get about, Fanny and Ann drove with him around the city, showing him the places of interest, and listening to his disparagement of them, in comparison with the extraordinary frontier phenomena of Chicago. Fanny, innately a New Yorker, remained tranquil under these disclosures, and turned a pitying smile upon the provincial young man, but Ann, who, it must be confessed, did her best to follow her friend's lead, was unable to stifle a faint suspicion that there might possibly be something in what Peter said. She knew, however, that the thought was unworthy of her.

"It is a pity there is no opera in the summer-time," Fanny said one day. "It would be nice if you could have an opportunity to hear one, now that you are in New York."

"Oh, I've heard opera in Chicago," Peter assured her. "The year before the war, we had four different companies, a couple of weeks each one. I went once, to *La Somnambula.* I didn't like it, though; I'll have to admit that. It was at Metropolitan Hall. You've nothing finer than that in New York,—at least, not much finer."

But it made no difference what he said, Fanny was impervious.

One afternoon just before he left Washington Square, Ann and Peter drove alone; the day was sultry, so they decided to go to Battery Park in search of a sea breeze. They were both a trifle uplifted at getting rid of Fanny's determined loquaciousness, but without her they were rather silent as they drove through the miles of arid streets, lined with conservative houses. Now and then the girl pointed out the dwelling of a friend, but for the most part they lay languidly back against the cushions; under her wide hat brim Ann's eyes were dark shadowed, and Peter's face was white, above his close brown beard. It was really very hot.

At the park entrance, Peter insisted that they get out, and walk over to the shore. Ann protested a little, smilingly, but finally she lifted her flounced and flowered muslin clear of the wheels, climbed down the

precarious folding steps of the barouche, and allowed him to lead her across the strip of lawn to where the river flowed magnificently past them to the near-by sea. A faint breeze from the ocean drifted tentatively over to them, now and then, and Ann sniffed it delightedly.

"Delicious," she said. "Let's sit here for a while." Peter found her an iron chair, and he sprawled at her feet, looking up at her intently. She took off her hat with the raking brim, and sat smoothing the ends of a lace barbe that trimmed it; her eyes were intent on her caressing fingers, her chignon shone in the sunlight. In the opening of her collar her throat was very white,—as white as her forehead, under her parted hair.

They sat there for some time; Ann watched the shadows of the trees in the park grow longer, while the late afternoon colors stole into the sky, and Peter watched Ann. Afterward she could not have told what they had talked about, but she remembered that steady disconcerting look. Much of the time they said nothing at all, but a realization that she should miss Peter was borne in on her. She felt very miserable, and she wondered if this time, too, it would be many years before she saw him again; she wished that she might keep him near her always, a comfortable companion. "Life," she said at length, "is horrid."

"Yes." Peter sat suddenly upright and clasped his hands around his sound knee. He turned his gaze, with something of an effort, from the girl's face to

the rolling river. "No matter how carefully he plans, a man is always a fool."

She nodded. "Yes,—just like a woman."

Peter remained somber. "I had it all planned out. I was going to let all this alone, you know, until I was about forty-five, and had time for it."

"Time for what?"

"Love."

Ann's eyes widened, and she straightened in her iron chair. It was the first time the word had been spoken by either of them, and now it lay like a gage between them. "We'd better be going home," she murmured. "It must be supper time." She didn't want Peter to make love to her; she didn't want anything to spoil the perfect companionship of the past four weeks.

He made no effort to detain her. It was not until they were going up the steps of the Washington Square house that he spoke again. "I'm about twenty years ahead of my schedule," he said cryptically.

Ann did not ask him to explain.

CHAPTER XXVI

A PROPOSAL

PETER's departure made an enormous gap in Ann's life, and she turned confidently to Fanny to fill it. She wanted a good gossip about Hendricks, but to her surprise, she found her friend singularly elusive. Mrs. William gave her to understand that the cousins had been together almost constantly while Hendricks was at home, but beyond that Fanny's mother was for once uncommunicative. She turned a ready purple with resentment at the upstart's treatment of her nephew, but at the same time the culprit fancied that she rejoiced in it. At any rate, Ann thought, Mrs. William's opinion made no difference, it was her uncle's judgment of the matter which she awaited with impatience.

By the time it came she had grown accustomed to the monotony of a life shorn of emotion. She liked the long unpunctuated days of late summer. The sight of the foreign envelope filled her with a strange dread; subconsciously she feared a reawakening.

Paris, August 29th, 1863.

MY DEAR ANN:

I have received three letters in my last week's mail and I may say that their contents astonish me. I feel an old man and a sad one, after reading them. My sister's-in-law I will not dwell on. She wrote

me at length of your trip to Gettysburg, and while, at this distance, it seems an unnecessary thing to have undertaken, I feel that I am too far away for judgment. I can only be glad you are safe at home again and thankful that Hendricks is spared to us.

Your letter told me of your final resolution to break with my nephew. I can not say that I am surprised, particularly in the light of later events.

"What events?" Ann murmured, at a loss to understand.

I will not conceal from you the fact that I am disappointed. I had hoped that, as time and the war went on, you might become attached to him; if, however, you can not care for him, you are right in refusing to marry. I have written him, and should tell you that I told him he will share equally with you in my property. It seems to me but fair to reward in this way, his fine accomplishments as a soldier, and you will, please God, have enough with but half.

And now, to the more serious matter of the other letter. You have never, in your letters, mentioned knowing a Count Avezzana, and yet he writes me for permission to ask your hand in marriage.

Ann gasped, and hastily reread this amazing statement, plainly written in her guardian's fine legible hand.

He writes me for permission to ask your hand in marriage, and, what is more, he states his belief that you will not prove indifferent to his suit. This I can not tell, but as he begs me,—reasonably enough, owing to the fact that his mission necessitates his ex-

peditious return to Italy,—to allow him to approach you at once, you may confirm or deny it in person.

I have, at his suggestion, made inquiries in regard to him at the Italian Embassy here. I find him to be a member of an important Italian family, and personally a favorite of the king. He should, I am told, go far. He has a palazzo in Rome, at present untenable for a supporter of Victor Emmanuel, a more modest establishment in Milan, and an ancient country place in Piedmont, where he was born.

I can hear only good things of him, but you must remember that he is a native of Europe, where the customs and the ideals differ greatly from those you have known. However, if your feelings for him are of a sufficiently affectionate nature, these differences may be overcome. There are examples of such happy marriages. I am greatly hampered by not being able to talk with you, and by your lack of frankness when writing me. All depends on your feelings toward this young man. I am prepared to receive him as your husband if that is your wish, and I must tell you that you would be making what the world calls a brilliant marriage.

I will not dwell on what your permanent residence in Italy would mean to me. I am, you must remember, an old man, with my life behind me. You must not consider me in making your decision, except, I beg of you, to this extent. Count Avezzana must soon return to Italy, and he asks, if you accede to his proposal, that you will marry him before he leaves America and accompany him to Europe. I have his letter here—"In the present deplorably disturbed conditions in my country it may well be years before I can again return to North America. Until Italy is united my place is there." It seems, therefore, my

dear Ann, that if you are to marry this young man, it must be done speedily, and in that case it will be impossible for me to be present. I find it difficult to believe that the ceremony would be legal without my presence, but such are the sad necessities of war. My work here is incomplete, and I have advices from the president begging me to remain indefinitely, as he is kind enough to believe me to be somewhat successful in my efforts to make public opinion for the Northern States. Therefore, if I may not take part in your wedding ceremony, I may, at least, share a day or two of your honeymoon. I shall await you in Paris with the liveliest anticipations.

My dear Ann, be sure to act with deliberation and foresight to the end that your best happiness may be preserved. I am writing to the Count Avezzana, giving him my permission to pay you his attentions.

Your affectionate uncle,

HENDRICKS CORTLANDT.

For a time after reading her letter Ann sat, stunned, without movement and almost without thought. The whole thing was too preposterous to grasp all at once, and her first feeling toward Avezzana was indignation at his having so needlessly disturbed her guardian.

"Marriage!" she exclaimed aloud.—"A stranger like that!" She went to the window to cool her flushed face, and standing there overlooking the familiar Square, she summoned back her dimming memories of the Italian. Indubitably, he was a romantic figure, more darkly beautiful than any other man she had seen, and with something unknown and alien about

him. . . . He had been very good to her; she recalled her awakening in the cottage, with Avezzana's eyes upon her, and the subsequent scene which had so filled her with unreasoning panic. . . . She remembered him on the train, elaborate in his efforts to save her from gossip. . . . He had asked for her guardian's address. Now she knew why. . . . How fantastic it all was! . . . He had been brave, too, there in the midst of the fighting. . . . And Italy was a most lovely place,—Densley had said it was a paradise for lovers. . . . This was what Densley would have wished for her,—a marriage with a romantic foreigner. . . . It was strange how remote her association with Densley seemed; only an irradicable impression of his sophisticated view-point remained, and a gentle regret. . . . It might have been years ago that he had died. . . . And yet, she thought, if she should consider Avezzana at all, it would be because of Densley. . . . Life was a queer business. . . . How could any one want to marry her without knowing more of her? . . . How did it go? . . . "For better—for worse. . . . Until death does us part?" . . . Still, it was nice of him. . . . A countess, too. Glamour stole over her senses, and yet she was sad; she did not know why. . . . Her guardian's acceptance of the idea of her leaving him depressed her. . . . It made her feel homeless and miserable. . . . To her amazement, tears suddenly brimmed in her eyes. She welcomed them in a luxury of emotionalism, and

flung herself face down across her bed. . . . Sobs shook her, powerfully.

She was interrupted by a sharp knock on her door, and Mrs. Cortlandt's flurried voice inquiring, "Ann, who in the world is a Count Guido Mario Avezzana inquiring for me,—and for you?"

CHAPTER XXVII

COURTSHIP

ANN stayed her sobs, and called tremulously, "Count Avezzana? Down-stairs?"

"Yes, in the library. Who is he?"

"He was at Gettysburg, Aunt Emily."

"You must come down at once."

"I can't. It will take me a long time! You go and see him, Aunt Emily, do."

"He asked for me, Ann.—Naturally I shall go down. —But hurry."

Ann found it impossible to obey this command. She wanted very much to see Avezzana;—she was breathless at the thought of him below, waiting. She was all on fire with curiosity as to what he would do next, but at the same time she wanted to look her best when she confronted him, lest he should regret his amazing overtures. She ran to the glass and scrutinized her face; although she had only just begun to cry, her eyes were undoubtedly rather red. "I look even worse than I did in the train," she murmured discontentedly, as she poured water into her wash basin. The cold was delicious to her flushed face; no one would ever know she had been crying, she decided, when she looked in the mirror again, after prolonged applications. She lingered over her dresses, too, unable to decide which one she should put on; she was determined that it

should not be black, and finally she selected an apricot green tissue, which she had worn in the spring before she put on her mourning. In it she had a young and vernal look that was undoubtedly charming. She had a heartening conviction of it, herself.

As she stole down the stairs she could hear alternately Mrs. Cortlandt's high voice, and Avezzana's lower, more emotional tones. "What are they talking about?" Ann wondered, pausing midway on the steps. She thought that they seemed to be getting on very well without her, so when she went down the long library to greet the young Italian officer she assumed a little air of indifference. Avezzana sprang to his feet at her coming and regarded her with intent eyes. He was more beautiful than ever, and his uniform was more splendid than the one he had worn on the field. Under his look she was inclined to be somewhat uncomfortable, and when he bent to kiss her hand she flinched visibly. It was impossible for her to accept this salutation casually, and she felt self-consciously that Mrs. Cortlandt's massive presence was not the place for an amorous interlude. She sent her a lightning glance under her eyelashes, but even before Avezzana's head was lifted, Ann could see that Mrs. Cortlandt had preserved an air of worldly complacence.

"Well," she thought unbidden, "I'll have to get used to it, if I am going to live in Italy."

After that they conversed. The three of them sat very upright in their chairs and went politely through the topics of the day. Ann was amazed at herself;

she had not dreamed she had such reserves of conventionalities. It seemed to her that hours passed before Avezzana rose smartly to his feet, bowed, implanted a kiss first on the exact diametrical back of Mrs. Cortlandt's hand, and then on hers, and prepared to take his departure. On his way to the door he paused, as though struck with a sudden thought.

"The ambassador from my country will be in this city on Wednesday. Would it, perhaps, prove amusing to you, *Signora,* to meet him? If so I will arrange a little dinner at the Fifth Avenue Hotel, where I am stopping for, it is possible, a fortnight."

"A fortnight," thought Ann, with a flashing grin. "He doesn't think it will take very long." However, an ambassador; that was something!

She rejoined the conversation to hear Mrs. Cortlandt accepting effusively for herself, Ann and Fanny. "You are stopping at the hotel;" she continued. "You are, I have no doubt, comfortable there. We are very proud of the Fifth Avenue, but after all,—a hotel!" She shrugged her plump shoulders scornfully. "It would give me great pleasure if you would take dinner with us on Sunday. I am only sorry that Mr. Cortlandt is not here to make you welcome." Avezzana accepted with every symptom of decorous delight, and took his departure without more than a glance at Ann.

It was all entirely incomprehensible; had any one except her guardian been involved, she would have thought the whole thing a gigantic hoax. Mrs. Cortlandt, however, was decidedly impressed.

"Whatever he sees in you, Ann, I can not imagine," she confided to the girl. "He is a charming young man. Such beautiful manners! Such delightful breeding!" Without going into it further Ann understood that Mrs. Cortlandt had been informed of Avezzana's intentions.

Fanny was greatly excited at the prospect of meeting a genuine Italian count, for, in the 'sixties, titles were a novelty in New York. She asked Ann a great many questions about him, to which that young woman replied dryly, "Oh, he is just a man, Fanny, like other men,—blacker, perhaps."

The Theodore Renneslyers came to the ceremonious mid-Sunday dinner, miraculously reconciled to Ann. Mrs. Renneslyer had not spoken to her since she had jilted Hendricks, and his father, on the one or two occasions when the girl had seen him, had been so filled with kindly embarrassment in her company, that she had minded it more than his wife's icy displeasure. She wondered what sort of a meal they would have, all together with Avezzana, and wished nervously that she might be excluded from it, as she had been in the rebellious days of her childhood. To her amazement, when Mrs. Renneslyer came in, just on the heels of the young Italian, she was full of a pleasing, if shallow, affection toward her; and her husband had returned gaily to his old lively comradeship. It was as though nothing had happened to discredit her with them.

Mrs. Renneslyer had bought herself new dresses on

abandoning her mourning, and she seemed, on this bright September afternoon, to have returned miraculously to her youth. She wore a filmy mauve frock, covered with frothy little ruffles of white lace, and a purple bonnet with pansies on the wide brim, which poked forward over her vivacious face. Her waist was perhaps a little thicker and her cheeks a trifle pinker than they had been on the day, so long ago, when Ann had first seen her, and if one were disagreeable enough to look for them, one might possibly find, in the shadow of her hat brim, a network of fine wrinkles about the corners of her pretty eyes, but her throat and her hands were as white as ever, while the glossy ringlets that clustered under the wreath of pansies on her hat were extraordinarily veracious.

Mrs. Cortlandt had asked no one else to dinner. "Only the family," she said archly to Avezzana, and he had responded with a grave courtesy which Ann thought made Mrs. William seem bourgeois. The talk at the dinner was, however, quite brilliant.

Mrs. Renneslyer had been to Italy before her marriage. "How can you bear to leave so beautiful a place?" she demanded oratorically. "It was in the spring when I was there, and there were roses everywhere,—everywhere I assure you, Ann,—and purple flowers, great masses of them, I forget their name—"

"Bogomvelia," Avezzana affirmed, smiling.

"Yes, that's it. So sweet! Of course I was there long before any one had heard of Garibaldi. I am quite an old woman, you see! I went down to Rome

and was presented to the Pope. I had to wear a black veil on my head, Fanny; it was really quite becoming, and the Pope was very sweet to me,—very. Oh, yes, I loved Rome! I was a great success there, too. I often wonder, Theodore, that I ever came back to New York to marry you. There was such an attractive man I met there! I wonder, Count Avezzana, if by any chance you knew him? Of course by this time he is probably a grandfather!" And then began a long cataloguing of possible acquaintances, in which Avezzana engaged himself vivaciously.

Ann wondered if the Italian were really amused by it. It was impossible to tell, when watching him from across the table. Now and then he glanced up, and his black eyes clashed with her gray ones, but there was nothing personal, nothing demanding, in his look; the man she had known in the little house at Gettysburg had vanished so completely that she thought her memory must have tricked her in regard to him. As for her guardian's letter,—she could only believe that Avezzana had, by this time, changed his mind in regard to her, for he had made no effort to arrange for a glimpse of her between the Thursday of his call and Sunday. In the drawing-room after dinner, however, he asked her, choosing a moment when she was protected by the presence of both the aunts, if it would be a proper thing for him to do to ask her to ride with him one afternoon.

"Quite, I should think," Ann said dryly.

Mrs. Renneslyer added smoothly, "In New York,

of course, we are not so rigid as you are in Europe; young girls do many things I would prefer a daughter of mine didn't. But you have my permission, Ann, to ride with Count Avezzana."

Ann grinned a little at that; then she recalled her last ride with the Italian, and a slow flush burned up in her cheeks, for the elaborate secrecy with which he surrounded that episode was making her self-conscious. It was arranged that they would go on the afternoon before the count's dinner for the Italian ambassador, but at noon of that day the heat broke in a sharp thunder squall and a flood of rain, so that riding was out of the question; Ann had an odd sense of relief at postponing the tête-à-tête.

In the evening they all wore their best clothes; when Mrs. William, Fanny and Ann drove through the rain in the big Cortlandt carriage, it could scarcely accommodate their flamboyant skirts. Ann was in white, Fanny in pink, and Mrs. Cortlandt in plum color. The older woman talked all the way of the charms of their young host; his good looks, his brilliancy and his fine manners. Ann wondered what she would be saying if she knew of the night in the little cottage at Gettysburg.

"Nothing against him," she thought cynically, "but probably a great deal against me!"

The dinner was a most impressive occasion. Avezzana had engaged a private dining-room in his hotel, and had decorated the table lavishly with flowers,

after the Italian fashion. He had secured distinguished company to meet his ambassador; a general in the Northern Army, whom he had met at Gettysburg, an ex-minister to Italy from Wilmington, Delaware, and an Italian capitalist from Chicago,—a squat, fat, swarthy man, who, when he talked at all, talked volubly of the possibilities of the fruit trade in America. The ambassador proved to be delightful. He was a fine-looking old man, with a white imperial and mustache, and sharp black eyes with long, fierce, white brows over them, which moved up and down frantically when he talked. Ann liked him at once; it would have been impossible not to have done so, for he immediately set about making himself pleasant, and she was by no means proof against such flattering attention. She sat on his right, for Avezzana had placed the aunts on either side of him, and she found herself devoting most of the evening to a discussion of her host.

"A charming boy," the ambassador said, smiling indulgently across the table at Avezzana. "I knew his father well, and his mother. Ah—*une bella Signora, Signorina,* and how she will enjoy you, so fresh, so naive, so American!" His English was extraordinarily fluent. "My young friend over there has a great life before him. It will not be long, now, when my king will have a united Italy; there will be no more fighting, —no more wars. The young Guido then will be free for politics, and he will go far."

Ann at this juncture made a feeble attempt to divert

the conversation into more abstract channels, but the ambassador would have none of it. "His family jewels!" he exclaimed, apropos of nothing, "such pearls! But pearls are too dull for you. I have seen his grandmother's diamond earrings, which wait for Avezzana's bride;—there is a tiara, too." His glance traveled to the top of Ann's shining head and rested there until she felt uncomfortably naked; she had never seen a tiara, to be sure, but her instinct told her the place for one. "And his houses. Do you like the country, *Signorina?*"

"Ye-es," said Ann. "Pretty well." She had in mind the little white farm-house in Milton Center.

"Ah, until you have seen Piedmont you have not seen the country! A beautiful old castle, *Signorina,* stone everywhere, inside and out; therefore, even in midsummer, you have never the heat like this. Such gardens! Such flowers! Such fruits! In America you have no idea of fruits—in spite of what our friend yonder is at this moment engaged in saying, by way of endearing himself to your so charming aunt, Mrs. Renneslyer. . . . And the moonlight on the terrace on a May night, *Signorina,*—even your cold American heart could not withstand that!"

"What does one do in the country in Italy?" Ann demanded lucidly.

"There is hunting, my dear young lady. You should see the Count Avezzana returning from the chase—"

Ann interrupted him ruthlessly, quite regardless of

the fact that he was an ambassador. "No, I mean what do the women do?"

The ambassadorial eyebrows flew up and down with extraordinary rapidity. "Oh," he said, "the ladies! Our sunlight, *Signorina!* To sit in it is Heaven! The ladies have always a parasol of some beautiful color; they make pictures, so, which a man remembers. They gather the flowers, too, and instruct the gardeners as to the fruits, and of course, *Signorina,* they talk, in more languages, perhaps, than in this, your country, but the context is the same,—for our ladies are no different in that respect from ladies all over the world." He laughed, secure in the humor of his little joke, and added, "And of course they have their devotions,—their charities."

"In the cities," Ann continued definitely, "what do they do there?"

The ambassador leaned back in his chair and expanded his white shirt-front genially. *"Per Bacco!*—such delightful lives! Not perhaps so energetic as this of yours, in this so charming country, but always suave, always feminine, you understand. It is the custom in the cities of my country to drive in the afternoon,—in Roma, on the Corso, and, in Firenze, in the Cassine; the ladies use the elegant open carriage like those in which the Queen Victoria drives. Also, because our king sanctions it, it has recently become the custom for the ladies to ride on the horse in my country, as they do in England,—but, you understand, with

somewhat less freedom. And there are balls,—soirées, —the opera,—all those entertainments which one finds in capitals,—and also, naturally, they have their devotions,—their charities."

Ann said nothing in response to this. She was wondering if the Italian ladies liked it, living cushioned lives like that. After all, a day had twenty-four hours: the ambassador's sketch left gaps her imagination could not fill. When she aroused herself to listen, her neighbor was off again on the possessions of the Avezzanas. This time it was the house in Milan he was describing. "Real Luini frescoes on the old plaster wall of the court, *Signorina,* and a Perugino Madonna, finer, it is said, than any example in the Louvre. . . . Great treasures, *Signorina,* a great family!" Almost, Ann thought, he was saying to her, "A great opportunity."

When the ladies were shawling, Mrs. Renneslyer murmured to Ann softly, "You are a sly puss, my dear, and it is no wonder that my poor boy could not carry the day against such a rival."

She swept out before Ann could defend herself, but on second thought the girl decided it was perhaps as well she had not had the occasion to explain to Hendricks' mother that she had never loved her son.

The dinner made a great difference in the attitude of the Cortlandts toward her, there was no question about that. Mrs. Renneslyer awarded her a reluctant respect, while Mrs. William deferred to her as though she were already one of the magnificent Avezzanas

about whom the Italian ambassador had talked. As a result, Ann's life was vastly more comfortable. Fanny regarded her with dazzled eyes; she turned suddenly shy; and was much too timid to discuss the possibilities of a great marriage. As for the girl herself, she could not help enjoying the extraordinary situation in which she found herself, and her wonderment as to what Avezzana's next move would be became a preoccupation. She felt like a woman in a play, bound to make expected responses to certain cues, but in no way a free agent. It was evident that Avezzana considered the dinner a definite step in his courtship, for every day, following that event, he sent her flowers; they arrived early in the morning, fresh and untouched by the September heat. In the evening he came, formally, to call on her and Mrs. William; it was always a repetition of his first visit; the older woman was invariably present, and the conversation flowed in shallow courses, so that Ann sometimes found herself swallowing yawns. Avezzana's form of courtship was new and exciting, but she came reluctantly to the conclusion that she did not like him, particularly. It was all very perplexing, but, at the same time, it was a fascinating game.

When the proposal finally came she was, for all her anticipation of it, caught unaware. The Italian came to dinner in Washington Square, and found her alone in the library. It was obvious that the others would be there in a moment, and Ann had no expectation of anything decisive impending, until, contrary to his

habit, Avezzana came close to her chair, and stood leaning over her with an air of affectionate proprietorship.

"It is coming!" Ann thought, staggered, and she began to talk rapidly of the extraordinary heat of the night. He brushed her simple defenses aside with a romantic gesture of his hand.

"I have something to ask of you."

"No. Please don't ask me anything, Count Avezzana." She knew, as she spoke, that he took her compunction for mere maidenly confusion.

He smiled, and surprised her. "Have I your permission to call you by your name? To call you Ann?"

In her relief, she almost laughed. "Oh,—that? Yes, of course, if you like."

This permisson encouraged Avezzana to an extraordinary extent. He leaned closer to her, and the scent of his pomade enveloped her with an odor entirely different from that used by American men. *"Grazia, mia Bella.* You know, perhaps, why I have remain so long in your city?"

"I thought perhaps you liked it," Ann said nervously. "I do."

Avezzana shrugged one of his slim shoulders. "Oh, it is very well," he said, "but when you will see the cities of my country,—Milano, Venezia—"

"Yes, I know," Ann interrupted him somewhat dryly, "your ambassador told me all about them."

Avezzana smiled nonchalantly. "Yes," he said, "he is a good fellow. It was my uncle got him his appoint-

ment. . . . No, I have remain so long in your city because of you, my Ann. You must have,—what is it you say?—guessed, that it was my intention to ask you to do me the honor to be my wife. Ever since that night at Gettysburg"—he broke off, and for a moment his deep look flickered away—"but we will not talk of that,—not now. It is only that since then I have the wish but for one thing." He slipped his hand over Ann's at this juncture. It was a small hand, rather like a woman's, she thought, as she yielded her own to its tight clasp. "Could you care for me?" he asked, smiling brilliantly down upon her; his assurance was contagious.

"I am afraid not," Ann said drearily; at the time it seemed to her unfortunate.

"I will teach you," Avezzana proclaimed joyfully. It was exactly as though she had not spoken. "You must marry me, my Ann. You must come with me,—to *Italia.*"

Ann continued to look at him, half hypnotized. "I think my uncle would like it," she murmured.

"But yes,—it is a good alliance. The only question is this, is it your wish?"

Her wish? She almost yielded to his power of suggestion. . . . Everything seemed to be pushing her toward this marriage. . . . Nineteen years old. . . . High time. . . . Every one would be pleased. . . . She had only to nod her head. . . . And there was Italy, even if it were only half as nice as the ambassador had said. . . .

She smiled rather miserably at Avezzana, and heard a tiny voice somewhere saying, "I really can't.—I'm sorry." She half regretted the words as soon as she knew them to be hers, and yet she did not recall them.

Avezzana flushed deeply, and for an instant the vivid passion of his nature flashed out, as it had at Gettysburg. "I must have you!" he said; for the first time he was loud and uncontrolled. "I will not give you up. How is it you can think to refuse me, after that night near the battle?"

"That is all past," Ann said. "It has nothing to do with my marrying you, or not."

With a violent effort, Avezzana regained his smooth control of himself; he lifted her passive hand and pressed his lips to it, just as he did every day when he came and went.

"Please," he begged, "give me a little time. Do not yet make up your mind against me, I beg you."

"Very well," Ann conceded grudgingly. "But don't be too hopeful."

That night, before he left, Avezzana had a word alone with Mrs. Cortlandt, and the next afternoon Ann came in to find the two closeted in the library. She was only too glad to steal past the door to the stair, filled with an exhilarating sense of escape.

She had been in her room but a few moments, when Mrs. Cortlandt rapped portentously at her door. She came in, Ann thought, like a ship under full sail. "Well, miss," she flung at the girl, with a complete

return of her old manner, "and so, having disgraced the family which has been your benefactor, you have the insolence to refuse to marry the man who is willing to clear your good name!" Even in her rising tide of anger Ann said to herself that Mrs. Cortlandt had undoubtedly been rehearsing that speech during her laborious progress up the stairs. It was a flight of oratory ordinarily beyond her.

"So," she said indignantly, "he has told you."

"And high time he did! What your guardian will think of such behavior—! All night! Alone!"

"No." Ann corrected her coldly. "Not alone. With Count Avezzana."

"Have you no sense of shame?"

"I have nothing to be ashamed of."

"No sense of shame at all!" Mrs. Cortlandt proclaimed to the four walls of the girl's room.

"I can't see why he had to tell you about it, now everything is all over."

"Over? Nonsense! Count Avezzana is willing to marry you, Ann."

"But I'm not willing to marry him."

"Of course you will marry him. Don't be ridiculous! Under any conditions, it is an opportunity vastly beyond your deserts;—a *contessa!*"

"But I don't love him, Aunt Emily."

Mrs. Cortlandt looked at her, exasperation written plainly on her face. "You have compromised yourself with him," she said. "You might just as well love him. You certainly will have to marry him."

"Do you think uncle would agree with you in that?"

Mrs. Cortlandt paused; for a moment she was staggered. "I dare say," she said at length, "that your guardian is sufficiently infatuated with you to excuse even this impropriety, but if you have ordinary gratitude for all his kindness, you will marry Count Avezzana, and save him the embarrassment of explaining your escapade."

Ann's eyes widened. She had not thought of that aspect of her sorry case. There was no doubt but that Mr. Cortlandt would come home to meet gossip about her; now that Mrs. William knew of her adventure, it would soon be all over New York. "I wish you would let me explain it to you," she said weakly.

Mrs. Cortlandt furled some of her sail, at this concession. She seated herself majestically, and bent a sorrying look on the culprit. "Nothing can ever explain it, Ann," she said heavily. "There is nothing for you to do but marry Count Avezzana."

"A man I don't love!"

"Stuff and nonsense! You have been half in love with him all along! . . . Haven't you?"

"Yes, but—"

"Plenty of girls marry on less than that. Half a loaf, you know, is better than no bread. He is a charming boy,—so handsome! So romantic! And your guardian approves the match. I have had a letter from him stating his wishes in regard to it."

"Oh, may I see it?" It seemed to Ann like a life line in drowning seas.

"Certainly not, miss. . . . This young man is everything you could want, titled, head over heels in love with you,—rich, even. You would be mad to hesitate, even if you had an alternative." She looked at Ann shrewdly. "Your guardian's choice! Have you no gratitude?"

Suddenly weariness engulfed Ann. This angry woman arguing with her! She wanted to be rid of her at any cost. . . . She could see years of railing stretching out before her, and innuendo about it, too; she thought, shivering, that nothing could be worse than that. . . . Perhaps it was true that other girls married without being deeply in love. . . . Her guardian wished the match. That, in itself, was enough. . . . She amazed Mrs. Cortlandt by a swift capitulation. "Very well, I'll marry him. You can tell him so."

She looked at the older woman in open sneering scorn, as she bounced up from her seat; Mrs. Cortlandt smiled, she even kissed Ann,—a swift peck on an averted cheek,—murmuring *"Contessa!"* as she did so.

Fanny was all aflutter over her friend's romantic alliance; the Renneslyers were pleasantly congratulatory, and flattered, too, and Avezzana was delighted. From the moment Mrs. Cortlandt conveyed the good news to him he bloomed into a happy conviction that Ann had loved him all along,—that it was only maidenly modesty which had prevented her admitting

it. He treated her with great consideration: he was all gentle protection; he was entirely controlled. When they met, after Mrs. Cortlandt's revelation, he kissed her on her cheek, with a swift intake of his breath, but after that he returned to the formal salute on her hand. He made no effort to sweep her away from her reluctant attitude, and Ann was piqued by such cold love-making; she recalled the passion of his advances at Gettysburg, and wondered both at him, and the civilization which produced him. He gave her an ancestral ring of such magnificent proportions that it fairly staggered her. With it on her hand she could think of nothing else; she could perform none of the ordinary duties of her life, and looking at it in its overpowering magnificence, she understood why the Italian ladies only picked flowers and sat in the sun.

From the moment of her acceptance, affairs seemed to move along entirely without her volition. She heard Mrs. Cortlandt and Avezzana discussing an early date for the marriage, her trousseau, wedding presents, and sailings, all at once. In a half-hour she was more nearly wedded to this stranger than she had been to Hendricks in all the years of her engagement, and she was aghast at such speed. She would, she told herself, marry Avezzana as willingly as any one else, but she wanted to overcome her strange lassitude, and experiment with his temperament,—to make little emotional expeditions against his determined reserve,—not to sit prosaically talking of how sensible it would be to buy her dresses in Paris, now that she was going

directly there, and of the number of weeks necessary to allow for hemstitching linen. Mrs. Cortlandt's enthusiasm swept her along on its high tide, mute, but already rebellious.

CHAPTER XXVIII

MARRIAGE

ANN entered into her second engagement to marry with a firm determination to like it. It was, she thought, the best thing she could do; she was touchingly ready to be happy; she was only too willing to view her lover with bemused eyes. At first this was made easy by the fervent congratulations of every one she saw; she lived, for a while, in an atmosphere of adulation, for when the announcement was printed in the papers, the future Contessa Avezzana became, all at once, an important person. Enthusiastic acquaintances stopped her on the street to assure her of the good looks of her count, and of the romantic nature of her engagement. It was romantic, she told herself a hundred times a day, and she delighted in Guido's dark beauty. When she was not with him, she thought of him with a fair similitude of ardor.

Their interviews, however, were not so satisfactory; the girl found them strangely baffling. Avezzana brought to them a sensuous atmosphere, it is true, of which Ann was tinglingly conscious, but which served only to make more barren the fact that she really knew nothing about this person she was to marry. Hitherto her erotic experiences had all been of an exploratory nature, but this man defeated all her tenta-

tive efforts to pry into the closed shell of his inner personality. In the beginning his careful formality amused the American girl; she liked to tease him into impulsive betrayals of it, but as the days ran on she had less inclination to do so. Their talk was of so trivial a nature that she, too, grew formal, but with the important difference that hers was a response to an inner recoil rather than to a complicated convention.

She made, one day, an unfortunate attempt to establish companionship. "Guido, I should like to take you over to the hospital. I haven't been there since we became engaged,—I am almost ashamed to go,—but I want you to see where I've been working."

"You will pardon me, *carissima mia,* but I prefer to forget those hospitals. . . . Here, in these so charming surroundings, you are all a young girl must be. . . . Beautiful,—without experience. . . . No." He reached out and took her hand in his as carefully as though it were made of fragile stuff. "My Ann, I have this to suggest—that you do not speak to my mother of those hospitals. . . . She would not understand."

"But—there was nothing wrong in my working there. I'm proud of having done it; it was my share of the war."

"*Si, carissima,* but now all is different." He kissed her finger tips, one by one, with an air of savoring them, adding, "Work is for men—*non è vero?*"

Ann looked at him curiously. She found his life

amazingly difficult to understand; he was like an unsuccessful bas-relief; she could not imagine him in the round. "What work do you do, when you are at home?" she asked definitely.

"I am an officer," Avezzana straightened importanty.

"But you hope soon to have peace, in Italy."

"*Che è intelligente!* Peace,—yes, but there remain much duties."

"What kind of duties?"

"Drills,—reviews,—but why should you understand?"

"Why shouldn't I?"

"You are a woman."

"What of it?"

Avezzana smiled deeply upon her. "Some day you will know," he murmured.

In spite of the fact that he evidently considered the matter closed, Ann persisted. "Haven't you any work to do, outside the army?"

"But yes,—there is always politics."

"Shall you run for something? How exciting!"

"R-r-run?"

"Yes. For Congress,—or whatever you have, in Italy."

Avezzana laughed at that, but Ann could see that he was affronted, too. "No, I shall not,—what you say?—'run' for political position. . . . You would better leave all this to me, *carissima mia*. It is not for you."

Mutinous lines appeared about Ann's mouth. "Is there nothing I can share with you, then?" she demanded.

"But yes,—all! Domestic life! It is enough, *mia Bella,* is it not?" He was so radiantly certain that Ann forbore to question further. She found herself unexpectedly thinking of Peter, and the delightful feeling of equality she had had when talking with him. Her eyes filled with sudden tears; she blinked them away amid Avezzana's solicitous inquiries.

In view of the fact that they were going immediately to Paris, Ann's trousseau was fairly utilitarian. With the exception of a white satin wedding dress, trimmed with a bertha of point lace, and waxy orange blossoms at the tiny pointed waist, there was nothing particularly grand about it. She had, of course, the customary dozens of underwear and linen to be expected from a girl of her position, but her traveling dresses were comparatively simple, and she had only one ceremonious gown of black velvet, spangled with little seashells of jet, in which she looked much too young for so matronly a garment. She was not appearing her best; she was drearily conscious of that, and Mrs. Renneslyer said so frankly. She explained that she was tired out from prolonged shopping. The wedding loomed so close that it was necessary to do everything in a hurry, and she attributed her lassitude to that, but she hated her dark circled eyes, enormous in her white face.

She found it impossible to think beyond the reunion

with her guardian in Paris. The fact that she was to spend the rest of her life in Italy was unbelievable, and she let it go at that. She simply could not take in anything so incredible. She wondered if any other girl was ever married in this way, almost without her own volition, but she was too tired and too dejected to protest. Instead she tried to do exactly what was expected of her every day, and every day a swift current swept her nearer the vortex. The wedding invitations were ordered, addressed and sent off by hand with extraordinary efficiency and haste. Ann was dazed by the speed which this machine of her own making attained.

Guido was a Catholic, and he explained casually to Ann that it would be necessary for her to join his church. She had no objections to doing so, and Mr. Renneslyer's facetious remark that he was afraid she would not enjoy confession won only a faint smile from her. Her father must have been a Catholic, she supposed, and one day she slipped into a service in a near-by church, and found the ancient ritual beautiful. Mrs. Cortlandt assured her, a bit nervously, that it made no difference what church one belonged to, really, and Ann agreed with her listlessly. Somehow all this talk seemed to have nothing to do with her, but it did add to her feeling of being thrust into alien things. The marriage was to be celebrated in the Catholic Cathedral, and she went up to look it over, late one afternoon. The distant altar swam in the

tremulous light of the candles, and boys in robes were moving mysteriously about. Guido belonged there, she thought, a part of all this traditional beauty, but she felt like a rude intruder. She could not imagine sweeping her white satin skirts up the long aisle.

She walked home, in the arid late September heat, with a curiously sinking heart. She could never remember being so spiritless; it frightened her to realize it. . . . Mrs. Cortlandt had said that it was to be expected, in a girl about to marry, but Ann wondered if she were correct in this assumption. . . . Surely, in that case, writers of fiction were most culpable in giving so romantic a glow to nuptials. . . . Guido was happy enough; she would have hated it had he been as depressed as she was. Perhaps, she thought, she owed it to him to tell him how lacking in enthusiasm she was. At the thought her heart leapt up; she would tell him, and possibly he might dispel this unnatural dejection. She found him waiting when she reached home.

"Where have you been, *mia Bella?*" he demanded gaily.

As Ann looked at his radiant happiness, a preverse desire to shatter it arose within her. "I've been to take a look at your church," she said coldly.

"My church? *Per Bacco,*—our church, *carissima,*—is it not?"

"Not yet."

"But so soon! In nine days we share all things."

"Shall we? Shall we really, Guido?"

"You ask me that!" His devastation at her doubt was thorough but theatrical.

Ann persisted, in spite of him. "We don't share anything at all, now. . . . There are things I can not even talk to you about. . . . It makes me very unhappy." She broke off, in a panic lest tears should make her protest ineffective.

"What things?"

"Well,—that night at Gettysburg, for instance."

"No, you are right, not that."

"But why not? It is where you fell in love with me.—You told me so, that morning, before you left. Don't you remember? It is a part of us,—that night. . . . It is ridiculous to act as if it hadn't happened!"

"In my code, it is considered wise to ignore certain things, when one makes conversation with a young lady."

"But we are going to be married,—in nine days! We aren't strangers. There should be nothing you can not talk to me about. . . . Love means that. It means perfect freedom. It means an obligation to tell the person you love everything. It means that all barriers are down."

"*Mia Bella,* how little you know of the joy of laying those barriers aside, one by one."

"That is an artificial thing to do, Guido! When two people love each other they should be natural. . . . We are never natural, when we are together."

"Nature? She is for the people,—not for you and me."

"But I am of the people, Guido. . . . You never seem to understand that! I wasn't born to all this luxury. When I was a child I used to be poor; I peeled the potatoes, and brought the cow in at night, and in winter I cleaned away the snow. . . . You don't like me to talk about that, do you?"

Guido's dark face flushed. "No. For the Contessa Avezzana it is not necessary to go quite so far back."

"You mean?"

"I mean, *carissima,* that in my country no one will question where I find you. It will be enough that you have become—my wife."

"It will never be enough for me!" Ann burst out: "Guido—can't you see that I am all wrong for you? Can't you understand that I can never make you happy?" She was horrified at her words as she said them, but she did not withdraw them. Instead she waited, breathless, to see what Avezzana would say.

To her amazement, he patted her hand with complete calm and murmured: "You are nervous, my Ann. . . . Do not distress yourself; you have only to leave all to me."

It was too much; the girl's nerves, to which he had so soothingly referred, suddenly snapped. She poured a torrent of appeal upon him; she found herself saying things of which she had never had any premonition; she begged him to let her go,—to forget her. It

was after this climax that she felt the Italian's cold eyes upon her; they brought her up sharp.

"Go? No,—never," he said frigidly. "You are a child to speak to me so! . . . This is what comes of unbridled talk! You see, my way is better."

"But, Guido,—I don't love you. I never entirely realized it before,—but I don't."

"Why should you, before we marry? It is enough that you do not dislike me. . . . After, you may leave it to me."

"But suppose I shouldn't grow to care for you?"

Avezzana smiled superbly. "I take the chance," he said.

"Doesn't it make any difference to you, knowing how I feel?"

"It puts me on my mettle, *mia Bella.*"

And that was the end of that: Ann realized quite clearly that she was, this time, well caught. In a moment Mrs. William came bustling into the room with a foreign package in her hands, which Avezzana identified as addressed in his mother's fine handwriting. The two of them opened it expeditiously, while Ann stood apart, watching them with sullen eyes. There was beautiful old Venetian lace in the package, and a necklace of diamonds which sent Mrs. Cortlandt into an ecstasy. She insisted on trying it around the bride's slim throat, in spite of Ann's indifference. . . . Avezzana stood looking on with shining eyes, and the girl realized that he considered her apathetic attitude a becoming one for the future Contessa Avez-

zana. . . . She escaped as soon as she could, on the plea of being very tired.

When she had gained her room, she shut the door behind her, and stood for some moments with her back against it. She was breathing hard and her eyes were wild. . . . What was it the ambassador had said of Guido? "You should see him returning from the chase!" . . . He was merciless. She knew, now, how he tracked down helpless things. . . . She looked about her at her pleasant, familiar room. . . . She would be in strange places, too. . . . There was no one to whom she might talk freely. If only her guardian were at home! On the spur of the moment, she determined to write to him, and she rushed to get out her desk. She had poured her heart out to him, and confessed all her unhappiness, when suddenly she remembered that when he received her letter she would be already married to the Italian. . . . Nine days, and it took a letter a full two weeks to reach France! Her guardian could not help her, then. She tore the paper into tiny bits and struggled with racking sobs. . . . As the pieces flew from her hands to the basket the last atom of her self-control fled, and she flung herself across her bed, in a passion of tears.

After a long time her sobs lessened, and she lay for a while, listening to the homely sounds that drifted in from the Square. . . . She was, now, more melancholy than desperate. . . . She wondered if she might get Fanny to advise her, but a memory of

her friend's aloofness since she had broken with Hendricks made her give that up with a sobbing sigh. The aunts were worse than useless, and she had no confidence in Mr. Renneslyer's good sense. . . Peter! How stupid she had been not to have thought of him before! There was, at last, some one to whom she could talk with absolute freedom! She sprang up, and wrote to him at once.

DEAR PETER:

I am to be married next week to Count Guido Avezzana. He is an Italian, and I do want to see you, very much. My uncle is still away, and I feel very lonely. If you are at Milton Center I wish you would come up to New York.

Yours sincerely,

ANN BYRNE.

P. S.—I hope you are quite well again. I shall always remember that you saved my life. A. B.

After that, she was happier, although she could not have said why.

It was less than a week before the wedding, when very early one morning old Joseph brought a note up to her. "A little boy, he brung it," he said. "They is no answer, Miss Ann." The girl opened it listlessly, entirely uninterested in its contents. She read:

Annie, you must come out and talk to me. There is no use in my coming to the house; I'd have no chance with you, with Mrs. Cortlandt and all that lot.

Bring a key to the gate with you, and we will sit in the Square where we won't be disturbed. I have to see you alone. It is a matter of life or death. PETER.

"Peter!" Ann's heart softened at his sprawling signature. Of course she would go to him. The comfortable companionship which she enjoyed with him seemed to reach out and touch her with a friendly hand. "Good old Peter!" she said aloud, putting any hat at all on her head, regardless of the way she looked. She ran down the stairs with more eagerness than she had shown in weeks. The key to the Square hung on a hook by the front door; she snatched it and was off like a flash,—down the steps and across the street. Peter was waiting for her by the gate. He looked very well, she thought, as she ran toward him; not beautiful, like Avezzana,—commonplace, perhaps,—but strong and plain, and comfortable. His rugged face was white, and she wondered if he were not yet entirely well.

"Annie," was all he said, as she gave him her hand, and she fancied there was reproach in his tone. His eyes had a hurt look; she thought suddenly of a puppy she once had, which grieved when she punished him.

"I am awfully glad to see you, Peter," she cried, gallantly opposing his depression.

They hurried into the Square and shut the iron gate behind them, with the air of conspirators. Ann wondered what Avezzana would think if he could see her running along with a strange man's hand on her

arm, but she did not care, she was so glad to see Peter! Good old comfortable Peter! Nothing alien about Peter, nothing mysterious, nothing restrained! They found a bench where the shade lay thick, although the sun shone on the pebbles of the path at their feet. There at last Peter spoke.

"Annie," he said, "you are not going to marry that Italian!" Ann looked at him open-mouthed; it would have been impossible for her to have been more surprised. Peter's eyes were fierce, and the bony structure of his jaw was suddenly noticeable to an extraordinary extent.

"You must be mad," the girl said at length. Her feelings were divided between indignation and amazement.

"I am not half so mad as you are," Peter snorted indignantly, "marrying a foreigner like that! How do you know he will make you happy? If he had been a New Yorker I'd have kept still, no matter how I felt. An American, that's one thing, but a foreigner! Going off to a strange country, too,—to Italy,—with him! What would you do if you didn't like it, away off there alone?"

Ann shivered a little, for suddenly the castle in Piedmont, where they were to go on their arrival in Italy, seemed like a prison to her; its heralded stone walls were frightening, and horribly depressing. "You haven't any right to talk to me like this, Peter," she cried fiercely. "I am unhappy enough, as it is."

Peter's entire face lit up at this incautious betrayal.

He pounced upon it at once. "Unhappy are you?" he asked. "That makes it simpler." He faced her mockingly. "I bet you're half scared," he said, "and wishing you didn't have to go through with it."

"There's something you don't know, Peter." She could feel her cheeks burn, under his eager eyes.

"What?"

"I—have to marry Guido. We—we were together all night, at Gettysburg."

"What of it?"

Radiant relief flashed into Ann's face. "Oh, that is what I tried to make them see! We were trying to get away from the battle, Peter, and we couldn't find the Sanitary Commission, and I was too tired to go on, and we found an empty house—"

"You can tell me the story of your life some other time, Annie. The thing to do now is to make up your mind to throw over this Italian."

"Oh, Peter, you know what I did to Hendricks? I have to marry Count Avezzana, now I said I would. Do you know what everybody would call me if I didn't?—A jilt! And I don't see how I could go on living with the Cortlandts if I did a thing like that, now they're so pleased with the match!" Doubts which she had been struggling to stifle came flooding over Ann, and she began to cry, softly and hopelessly.

"You don't have to live with the Cortlandts," Peter said roughly. He leaned over and put an urgent hand on her arm. "You're coming to Chicago to live with me."

Ann was too startled to reply. She looked at him in wide-eyed astonishment, her last tears trembling on her cheeks. Peter answered the interrogation in her look.

"You don't think I came here just to talk, do you?" he demanded. "I came to take you back with me, and I am going to do it. Do you know what this is?" He produced a stiff official-looking paper from his coat pocket. Ann shook her head, speechless. "It's a marriage license, that's what it is! I've got it all fixed up with a minister at the Unitarian Church, to marry us this morning."

"But, Peter," Ann expostulated feebly, "I never heard anything so ridiculous in my life! I am going to marry Count Avezzana next Wednesday, at eight o'clock, in the Catholic Cathedral."

"Are you a Catholic?"

"Not yet, but I will be, Monday. Everybody in Italy is, you know."

"Well, you can go ahead and be a Catholic, if you want to, but the wedding is off! Understand that?"

"Why, Peter, I'll have to go through with it,—so late, like this."

Peter frowned at her fiercely. "You have to do nothing of the sort," he stormed. Suddenly he let go his grasp on her arm to take hold of her shoulders and pull her toward him with a pleasant roughness. He looked at her for an instant, so close that she could see the black specks swimming in the yellowish color of his eyes. Then he kissed her.

"How about it?" he demanded boyishly, holding her away from him and laughing into her perturbed face.

"Oh, Peter, I don't know. I've got my trousseau and everything, and Guido has given me a lot of things,—rings and brooches,—and I have had a present from his mother, and a letter from uncle. I think he wishes me to marry Count Avezzana—I've been such a trial to him.—I couldn't disappoint him again."

Peter's mouth set in a straight severe line. "This has nothing to do with any one in the world except you and me," he said sternly. "I guess you know I love you, all right. I didn't say anything before because I am so damned poor. I thought I'd go back to Chicago and work like the devil and make some money before I tried to tie you up, but you have rushed me. You belong to me, Annie, don't you know that?"

A delightful peace settled down on Ann. "I never knew it before this minute," she sighed happily.

"It will be hard work at first, but you won't mind that, will you? You're strong, and you weren't born to all this luxury. We'll do something out there before we're through, and we'll do it together. Partners! I've got a little money. My mother left me thirty-five hundred dollars, enough to get us started, and I'll be damned if I can't support you. Support you! Before I get through I'll make a rich woman of you. But just at first, Annie, if it is hard work you won't mind?"

"Peter, I'd love to work," Ann assured him expan-

sively. "I hate being a fine lady. That was one of the things I dreaded—I don't want to be a *contessa;*—I want to do things in my life,—do them myself. But do you think it would be possible for me to marry you, and just go off? Leave all this behind me?"

Peter laughed and kissed her again. "Possible?" he said. "It's happening.—You'll be my wife in half an hour."

They came out of the little Square with an even more conspirital air than that with which they had gone in. It was almost noon and the streets were deserted. Peter would not allow Ann out of his sight even long enough to go home for her gloves, but hurried her off to the horse cars, where she sat silent while he talked to her steadily of the new life she was about to undertake. He gave her no time for thought, no empty moments in which she might change her mind. The minister was waiting for them. He seemed extraordinarily unclerical to Ann, used to Episcopal robes and ritual, but his church was convincingly righteous, and she was forced to believe that the brief ceremony which they went through was entirely legal. The minister shook hands with them both, and it was over.

Out on the street Ann wondered if horror were the feeling that overpowered her, but when she stole a glance at Peter's determined face, she knew that it was not. Secure in his strength, she could no longer fear the future, no matter how long it might be. It was he who told her just what she should do. She was

to go home to Washington Square, put into her new trunk all her old clothes, and such parts of her trousseau as might be useful in the extremely plain life which confronted her. She was then to leave a tag on the trunk with directions to forward it to a hotel in Chicago.

"The Adams House is pretty grand for us," Peter said, laughing, "but I guess we can stand a few days of it until we find a place of our own to live in. After all a man doesn't take a honeymoon every day."

He waited outside in the Square while Ann went home to do her packing. She wondered, as she climbed the familiar high steps, if this were the last time her feet would ever pass that friendly threshold, and as the shadow of the house fell over her she thought, too late, of her guardian's possible reaction to her mad behavior. She slipped in and up the stairs without meeting any one. Her room was already in a pandemonium of packing; three trunks stood about with their great mouths gaping for the fine new clothes of her trousseau. She chose the larger one, and hastily put into it the plainest dresses she had, a part of her linen, and her underclothes. Her uncle would not begrudge her that, she knew, but she left all the finer things behind her. Avezzana's jewelry she tied up in a little box; she struggled for some moments to write him a note to accompany it, but found that she was quite unable to do so. Instead she scrawled across a piece of paper, "I am sorry. Ann," and folded it away with the diamonds. Peter's

wide gold wedding ring looked very plain and sensible on her hand, in place of Avezzana's gorgeous token. There remained only the necessity of writing to Mrs. William, and this she accomplished with ease. "I am married to Peter Smith," she said briefly, "and I am going to Chicago with him to-day. I know there is no use trying to make you understand how I came to do it, but please believe I am sorry to pain all of you, and Count Avezzana. Tell him for me that I am ashamed of myself, but that I can not help it." She addressed the note to Mrs. Cortlandt and then for the first time wrote her new name upon a piece of paper, "Mrs. Peter Smith, Adams House, Chicago. Please forward."

She stuck the label on the top of the trunk, cast one sorrowful look about the room which had given her sweet shelter for so long, and stole off down the stairs and along the Square to where Peter was waiting for her.

CHAPTER XXIX

HONEYMOONING

ANN and Peter spent the first night of their journey in Albany, arriving there in the early dusk. All the long afternoon they had sat side by side in the narrow car seat, watching the sun sink lower over the Hudson, until the jagged Catskills swallowed it up, and the river ran softly in their engulfing shadow. Peter now talked very little, but he sat close to Ann, and when the train rocked on the rough road bed, or swung around a curve, he swayed lingeringly against her; she could feel his reluctance as he drew away. The touch of his arm upon her troubled her, and she was uncomfortably conscious of his influence over her. It made her thrillingly apprehensive of the unknown future, and she could think of nothing else; even her guardian's probable regret at her rash act seemed, with Peter's arm pressing hers persistently, unimportant. She accepted the fact of their marriage more readily than he did.

"When I think that I've got you, in spite of everything, I think I must be mad, and having hallucinations!" he confided to her, and she laughed, tangible and desirable, into his ardent face. She knew that it was true, what Peter said,—that only yesterday she had been, indubitably, his worldly superior, but so

certain was she of an inner intimacy,—a harmony of her soul and his,—that she found no place for astonishment at her unexpected come-down in the world.

Albany was in the throes of a great Sanitary Commission benefit which all of upper New York was, apparently, attending. The bride and groom went from hotel to hotel in vain; every one was full. The best thing they could do was to prevail upon a kindly, middle-aged woman to allow Ann to share her room, while Peter bunked on two chairs in the office. The young people bade each other a rueful farewell at the foot of the stairs, but they laughed, too, for it was a funny way to spend a wedding night.

Early the next morning, after a gay and sparkling breakfast, they continued their journey. Ann had never seen Niagara Falls; and when Peter voiced her secret desire to visit this paradise of honeymooners, and suggested they break their journey there, she acquiesced with shining eyes. There were several suspicious-looking young pairs standing about the station when they arrived, and Ann and Peter lost something of their horrid self-consciousness, in suspecting them.

They drove up to the hotel in the bus that had met the train, in the company of two other blushing couples. "If you look at them long enough," Ann whispered to Peter, "you can make them think we are old married people!"

But Peter whispered back, "I'm glad we're not! Aren't you?"

The hotel seemed most magnificent, as they approached it over the curving drive that lead to its high front steps, flanked by long and spacious wooden porches, where old ladies sat in terrifying rows, knitting, and all rocking in unison. They looked up as the bus stopped; it was obvious that they counted the abashed passengers, two by two, as they descended, and they smiled knowingly the while.

Peter delayed for some time at the desk, talking prices with a supercilious clerk. Their room, when they finally reached it, was very small,—Ann had never lodged so humbly before,—but its window opened on a garden in the rear of the hotel, and there was, after all, a place for the bags.

The boy who had shown them up-stairs deposited a thick white pitcher filled with drinking water upon the table, and opened the window, after which service Ann automatically gave him a coin from her purse, and he departed, shutting the door behind him.

It was the first time that the bride and groom had been left alone. They stood as he left them, rooted to the violently flowered carpet. More than anything else, after her dusty journey, Ann had wanted to wash, but in her suspense as to what Peter would now do, she forgot all about it. She forgot all about everything except Peter, and she looked at him slyly, under her lashes. He stood quite still for a moment, stocky and rather lowering, because of his self-consciousness. Feeling Ann's eyes on him he threw her an elaborately casual glance, and crossed the room to the window,

which he lifted, with great pains and care, exactly two inches. Ann smiled, suddenly mistress of the situation, now that she knew Peter was as nervous as she.

"You'll want to freshen up," he suggested with specious ease, "and rest a bit, before supper. I'll go out and take a look around. You can get a good sleep."

Ann flashed a radiant look at him. "I am tired," she admitted.

"Well then,—good-by." Peter made toward the door, and paused. Ann's heart missed a beat, as he came slowly toward her. "Don't forget me," he said, and took her in his arms, gently enough, but closely. Ann's startled eyes fell before the ardent look in his, and he kissed her lids, laughing softly as he did so. They stood for an instant, smiling vaguely, and then Peter's grasp tightened, and for the first time he sought her lips. She abandoned herself to his kiss, clinging weakly to him, without definite thought; she was in a whirl of emotion. It seemed a long time before Peter drew back; he was breathing hard, and she saw that the black pupils of his eyes had almost obliterated the yellowish iris.

"I'm off," he said thickly, and was gone without another look.

Ann bathed, and lay down on the bed; she thought that she could not sleep. . . . When she listened for it, she could just hear a far-off, roaring sound which she was sure must be the Falls. . . . She hoped that Peter was not seeing them without her.

. . . Peter. . . . How strange that she should have married him. . . . Peter. . . . He was not handsome, but he had a look of strength. . . . He had a sudden smile, too. . . . Peter. . . . She awoke in a panic lest he should have returned. She could see that the sunlight lay in long glittering lanes on the fresh grass, so she knew it must be almost supper time.

She put on a brown silk dress that she had brought in her bag. It went very well with her red hair, she decided, as she fastened the crisp white collar with a cameo brooch Mr. Cortlandt had given her on her eighteenth birthday. She was a smart and appealing figure, as she descended the wide stairway that led to the office; when Peter saw her a light leapt into his eyes.

They went in to supper at once, half starved after their journey, and a luncheon snatched while the train waited at a station eating house. Fellow diners beamed sympathetically upon them, but they were oblivious to it. A negro waiter with a wide smile served them solicitously, and they ate steadily through the hearty American plan meal. He brought them course after course, served in tiny white dishes, and carried high over his shoulder, on a tin waiter precariously poised on one hand, but they remained undaunted. They laughed often, as they ate, and their eyes were very bright and shining.

After supper they walked over to the Falls, which Peter had refrained from looking at by himself. Ann

thought it was very sweet of him to have waited; she delighted in thinking that she was necessary to his enjoyment even of so stupendous a work of nature. It was rather dark on the path, and Peter held her hand very tight, but when they came out on the platform beside the Falls the air was all a filmy whiteness, reflected from the foam. The roar Ann had heard was intensified a thousandfold; the night was filled with rushing sound. Very near them, only a few yards away, Niagara tumbled headlong. Ann looked at it with terror; she wondered what would happen to her if she were flung on that resistless torrent. As though he had read her thought, Peter slipped his arm through hers.

"Don't go too near," he cautioned quietly.

Ann abandoned herself to that safe clasp. . . . Peter. . . . Good old Peter. . . . She smiled at him mistily in the wan light of the foam.

They stood there for some time, linked by the clasp of Peter's hand; they told each other that they felt very small and unimportant, but they each knew better. Niagara rolled on majestically before them, but they, too, had something majestic in their lives. . . . After a while they did not speak at all; they only stood and listened, and felt the world tremble; they, too, trembled, sensitively.

After a while Ann had a feeling that Peter wanted her to suggest going back to the hotel; therefore she did so, although she felt herself flushing, in the night. On the dark paths he was distant with her; he was

very gentle, very reassuring, and back in the blazing hotel office, he smiled at her, the sudden quick smile that she liked. He sent her up-stairs alone, murmuring that he would follow her in a few moments.

She undressed with lightning quickness, and soon she was arrayed in her thick cambric nightgown, with its prim ruffle of French embroidery about the slim column of her throat. She braided her hair in two shining plaits. The bed was ready; she crept into it, and lay along the far side, against the wall. It seemed a long time that she waited, but at last she heard footsteps coming down the hall. She could make out the slightly uneven sound of Peter's gait. There came a little knock at the door, tremulous and apologetic, and all unbidden, a thought flashed through Ann's mind.

"It couldn't have been Hendricks! It never could have been Avezzana!" She called out, in a clear full voice, "Is that you, Peter? Come in!"

CHAPTER XXX

THE END OF THE RAINBOW

ANN came into Chicago armed with a brave determination to make the best of things, but she expected the worst, for Peter's panegyrics had not really shaken her belief that the United States had but one city, which, in daring all for love, she had left behind her. No pioneer wife adventuring into the prairie wilderness was more sternly courageous.

The bride and groom spent the last night of their journey in Detroit, and arrived in Chicago at sunset of a clear September afternoon. All day long the sky had been poignantly blue, with great clouds like continents adventuring over its trackless expanse, but at sundown this pellucid quality was clouded by an impalpable dust. The sun set royally, in banks of fire-edged cloud; the whole west was flushed to orange and rose. The car was filled with colored light, that turned all white things pink,—Ann's handkerchief and Peter's formidable collar, with high points which dug into his cheeks.

They had been running through rusty woods where pale cream-colored sand-hills thrust their stark crests through brownish undergrowth; it was, Ann thought, too strange to be beautiful, and yet she looked out of her window eagerly. She had no warning at all of

what was coming when suddenly the train burst from enveloping trees, and ran along the shore of Lake Michigan. It lay on the right-hand side of the railroad, vast and blue and unfathomable; its waters stretched to the farthest horizon, yet lapped the low embankment where the tracks were laid.

"See!" Ann cried involuntarily, "it is high tide."

They laughed together over her mistake, and pointed out to each other sails on the blue expanse. As they watched, the clouds on the eastern horizon took on an enchanting rose-colored reflection, and the tops of the amiable waves mirrored it, although their depths remained deeply blue.

In no time at all, Peter was urging Ann to look at the other side, where scattered buildings testified to the beginnings of the town, and presently the train roared on to a trestle, while she looked, and gasped. To her right was the lake, already familiar to her; to her left there lay another sheet of water, a little lagoon, which stretched from the high embankment over which the railroad ran to a distant street. It was like molten gold, in the sunset, and on it were numbers of rowboats, and even a tiny sail-boat or two, coming to anchor in the close of the day. On the street beyond, dignified houses with fronts of yellowish limestone stood singly, surrounded by trees, or in austere rows, broken, here and there, by a frame cottage of an earlier time, and shielded by double files of cottonwood trees.

"But it is very elegant, Peter," Ann said in a low

voice. She had not expected to find anything so metropolitan in the new city of but one hundred fifty thousand inhabitants.

"Isn't it?" He was frankly triumphant. "Perhaps we'll live there some day. Just be patient, Ann. I'll work. You've never seen anything like the way I'll work."

"We'll work together," Ann declared stoutly. Indeed, she wanted no better fate.

There was time before supper for a brief survey of the environs of the hotel, so Ann and Peter left their bags and walked aimlessly about in the rich light, over echoing wooden sidewalks, and up and down innumerable little flights of steps built to accommodate the uneven grades of the streets. They went into a small park across from their hotel, and found a bench with a good view of the late afternoon driving which animated Michigan Avenue. Ladies with bouffant skirts leaned elegantly back in comfortable family rockaways; their horses were humanely draped with fly nets, and the hired men who drove them lolled at ease upon the front seats. Gentlemen whose sporting equipment reminded Ann of Mr. Renneslyer's, drove pairs of swift long-tailed horses to high buggies with great canopy tops folded behind, or rode briskly down the street on horseback, in long, light checked trousers, high hats and dark coats, exactly as they did in New York. Ann was amazed. "I wish Fanny could see this!" she exclaimed, from time to time.

After supper Peter suggested the play at McVicker's Theater, but Ann begged to go instead to Colonel Wood's Museum, where a transparency strung across the street advertising, and picturing, the largest woman in the world, had piqued her curiosity. They went, and gaped at her satisfactorily. What did Ann, in her slim youthfulness, have in common with a lady weighing an alleged nine hundred pounds? When she stood before her the contrast piquantly doubled the phenomenon's size. The bride and groom wandered happily among the curios and lesser freaks, and Ann wondered that such perfect comradeship could exist. Her eyes shone with happiness, and her gaiety bubbled up irrepressibly.

At breakfast the next morning she looked across the table at Peter, as he finished off his last buckwheat cake. "Do hurry," she said impatiently.

"What for?"

"Why, Peter, I haven't seen your shop yet!"

Peter's happy face clouded. "There's time enough for that," he said. "You had better let me get it fixed up before you come."

All Ann's morning radiance fled. "Fixed up?" she echoed. "Aren't we partners?"

Peter smiled at her tragic tone, and patted her hand surreptitiously. "Of course we are," he murmured consolingly. "I'll make the money and you can spend it. That's a partnership, isn't it?"

At this the bride's eyes filled with foolish tears, and

Peter looked at her in chopfallen alarm. "If you feel like that," he said hastily, "of course we'll go. We'll go right now."

"I'm—I'm silly, I know." Ann sat blinking rapidly to get rid of her tears, fearful of fellow-breakfasters' interest in them. She smiled mistily. She had won her point, but, although she said nothing further, a slight feeling of soreness remained. When they arrived at the shop, however, she understood Peter's reluctance, for they had left the genteel neighborhood long before they came to it. The streets in that quarter were in bad condition; Ann's new boots, and even the white stockings above them, were well plastered with mud, while on the corner was an abandoned wagon with the sign "No bottom here" humorously hung from its half submerged body.

"Peter,—how shocking! I think it is very shiftless not to put down pavements."

"Can't do everything all at once," her husband responded cheerfully, as he eased his key into a rusty lock.

Ann was secretly aghast at the mean appearance of Peter's heralded place of business. Inside, three years' accumulation of dust lay on the small forge and the workbench, and cobwebs draped the dirty windows.

Peter looked about eagerly enough. "It's good to be back!" he exclaimed, stretching out his arms jovially. "This beats sojering a pile."

He showed his wife a rough little model which stood on the table. "Know what that is?" She shook

her head; somehow she found it impossible to speak. "It's an improvement on the reaper machine. I held off enlisting for two months to finish it. You see, it saves man-power, and I knew that would be a good thing for the country, in war-time. When I had it done I carried it over to Cyrus McCormick." Peter laughed grimly. "He told me they'd already perfected that idea, and he took me out into the works and showed it to me in the making."

"How outrageous! Couldn't you sue him, or something?"

Peter laughed indulgently. In a bride this ignorance was charming, and he kissed Ann delightedly, amid the confusion of his little shop. It was an adventure to kiss her there, in that place sacred to the serious business of making a living.

It quickly became evident that Peter's small capital could not long stand the strain of hotel life, and he suggested that possibly they would better board for a while. "It would give us time to look around," he said hopefully.

Ann was, however, horrified at the idea. "I should hate boarding," she said. "Nothing to do all day, and really, Peter, it isn't very genteel."

She was surprised at the ease with which she won her point, for she had yet to learn that in judgments of this kind her husband bowed to her greater worldliness. Indeed when the decision was made he was conscious of feeling pleasantly superior to the countless other young couples who were making so humble

a beginning. After some search, they rented a small frame cottage near the most desirable marble front district, on the west side of the city. It had only one story, but it was set up on a high cellar masked by a bright green wooden lattice. There was a narrow front porch, with a row of steep steps leading to the walk, and behind a neat fence of wooden pickets, quite a good sized yard, with a big cottonwood tree growing in it, and a tiny garden tucked away behind the house. The owner gave them immediate possession, and they bought from him his big nickel-plated heater, and the brown mottled oil-cloth on the hall and parlor floors.

Settling proved pure joy. Peter was a miracle of efficient energy. He painted woodwork and floors with a speed which so fascinated Ann that she could only stand and watch him; he cleaned stovepipes and drains; he mended hinges and locks, he put new faucets on the kitchen sink and even a boiler beside the range, so that his wife should have hot water. Ann had never thought about hot water before; she had accepted it as manna from heaven; now it came as a miracle,—a gift of love.

Three meals a day were the only drawbacks to all this exciting happiness. Ann found that she was very stupid about things like keeping up the kitchen fire, and remembering to put potatoes on to boil; she could not seem to consider them important, and yet Peter evidently did. At first he did most of the serious cooking himself, while his wife looked on, and offered him

knives and spoons at the wrong moment. It was all delightfully amusing, but she had a nervous suspicion that later something more exacting would be demanded of her.

They spent one glorious afternoon in the shops, selecting the simple necessaries for their housekeeping. They chose a white china set, with a hair line of gold on the edge, and they priced rosewood parlor suites exhaustively, before they gave up the idea of one as hopelessly beyond their means. They bought a square of flowered carpet, however, to lay over the brown oil-cloth, a walnut what-not on which to arrange bric-a-brac, when they should have any, and they really plunged on a butternut bedroom set. Ann had secretly hoped for a piano, but as Peter had apparently never considered such an extravagance, she said nothing about it.

The mysteries of economical housekeeping staggered her; she seemed to have learned nothing during the years in which she had charge of her guardian's house, and she wondered at the smugness with which she had assumed that telling an efficient cook what they would eat three times a day was all there was to it. Peter took her to market, so that she might learn the cheaper cuts of meat, but while she was still vainly struggling to detect the difference between a shoulder and a rib, he had mastered the whole carcass. One day, however, she ventured as far as the center of town by herself, and on the corner of the Court-House Square she found a man selling canvasback ducks, and a dozen

quail strung on a string, for a vastly lower price than Peter's butchers' meat; she went home elated at feeling herself, after all, an adequate helpmate. After that, whenever she was particularly hard up, she made her purchases there.

When the cottage was finally equipped, and Ann had demonstrated that she was the equal of any coal stove, the two young people faced the solemn fact that their honeymoon was ended. The night before Peter went back to his shop they had a final celebration. He bought tickets for McVicker's Theater, and the two hung over the gallery rail entranced at Mr. Hackett's performance of *Henry the IVth,* followed by what the program referred to as a *Grand Dance,* and a brief farce entitled *The Pretty Horsebreaker.* It was an extraordinary amount of entertainment to have condensed in one evening, and it was late when they came out of the theater. A mist almost heavy enough to be called a rain had drifted into the town from the swampy prairies to the west, and Ann delayed to turn up her silken skirts, in spite of the fact that Peter impatiently pressed her to make haste lest they miss the car. He hurried her off, ominously silent while she chattered of the play, and when they rounded the corner the street-car had indeed started. It was perhaps a block away from them, and the homeward-bound horses were making good time through the empty streets. Peter ran savagely after it, and might have overtaken it, had not Ann proved unequal to the pace. He ran on for a few yards after she dropped

behind, and then abandoned the chase. He stood waiting for her to overtake him. "Damn!" he said loudly. "You've made me miss the car." Ann looked at him open-mouthed. He spoke as though no tie of affection bound them, as though he could hate her, his wife. "Always late, women," he scolded. "There won't be another car for an hour, this time of night."

"Could I know that?" Ann demanded, plucking up some of her spirit, and facing him defiantly.

"Why couldn't you hurry? Here I have to go to work early to-morrow morning. . . . Where you going?"

"I shall walk." Her voice was infinitely frigid.

"You'll do nothing of the sort. This mist.—It's going to rain. . . . Annie! Stop, I tell you!"

"Take your hand off me!" She shook Peter off, and stalked away from him; she walked on rapidly, alone in the dark streets, thinking bitterly that it was for this she had left her guardian. Subconsciously she listened for Peter's footsteps, but she heard no sound, and concluded that he had let her go without him. Miserable tears began to steal down her cheeks.

In a few moments there came a great rattling, and a clatter of a horse coming toward her over the rough pavement. A carriage swung furiously to the curb, and she swerved nervously away as a man burst from its dark interior, but at once she knew it was Peter. He seized her roughly, and drew her, unresisting, into the musty privacy of the hack. He kissed her wet face tempestuously.

"Annie! Don't cry. I've got such a devil of a temper! I'm sorry. Don't sob like that! I never know what I say when I'm angry! It was all my fault. Annie, kiss me!"

She kissed him, her frozen anger melted by the fire of his contrition, and in reconciliation she found a new stimulation to love. . . . It was late when she went to sleep. . . . Long after Peter was deep in slumber, she lay, very still and wide-eyed in the dark, thinking things over. She bore no rancor; her forgiveness was complete, but she recognized something in her life with which she must reckon. . . . Peter's temper. . . . She had never seen any one in unbridled anger before. . . . She felt very far away and alone. . . . Presently she slipped one finger into the loose circle of her sleeping husband's hand, and yet the touch did not entirely reassure her.

In the morning Peter was all sunny good humor. He made the kitchen fire and started the breakfast before he awakened Ann; when she sprang up guiltily, she sniffed the delicious odor of frying ham. He went off to work reluctantly, and yet she knew that he was eager to start again. And so their life together began.

For the first few weeks Ann was completely absorbed in her housework. In a month she had learned to have the essentials of a simple meal all ready at the same time, but she never became more

than a fair cook. She worked all day, just as Peter did, but often she walked to the shop with him in the morning, and came home laden with packages from the cheaper stores off Halstead Street. Sometimes she lingered to watch her husband plunge into his day's work; he forgot all about her, as soon as he turned to his forge. It seemed to her extraordinary that almost at once he had more than he could do, and his brief explanation that his was the lowest bid on a contract for pipe-fitting left her singularly uninformed. He was childishly irritated at being questioned, and Ann early decided upon the wisdom of a silent partnership. It was not, it is true, what she had imagined her life with Peter would be, on the morning they had discussed it in Washington Square, but after two months of marriage Ann felt infinitely removed from the girl she had been. She was a housewife, absorbed in her duties. Excitement of a vicarious sort no longer appealed to her. She was all wife; her life hung on Peter. Up to the time of her marriage she had never heard of the word passion, except as applied to fits of temper. Straight from her reticent background, she felt, with glowing cheeks, that she and Peter had made unique discoveries, and she was sorry for the rest of the world, outside their secret pale. It was not all passion, either, or, at any rate, not exclusively that. The two laughed at each other like children; they played foolish games together, and called each other ridiculous names. Their interests were abso-

lutely united; neither one had friends in Chicago, nor felt the lack of them, in their absorbing discovery of each other.

In due time Ann's trunk arrived. Her things were just as she had left them, but there was not a word from the Cortlandts. She unpacked trinkets and momentos of her youth,—among them Densley's Manet, strangely glowing on her chocolate colored walls,—and her eyes filled with tears at the memories of her guardian they waked. Had he come back from Europe, she wondered? Was he well? Did he miss her? But no,—she did not need to ask that, for if he thought of her with any tenderness he would surely have written to her. Peter came in for dinner, to find her brooding, and his meal was not ready. He said unkind things of the Cortlandts, while she fried his chops.

About her the war roared on, and now her interest centered in the Army of the Tennessee, for the western newspapers printed little of the exploits of the Army of the Potomac. Often Peter took her to Union mass meetings. They stood swaying back and forth with the crowd in the Court-House Square on the night that George Root's *Battle Cry of Freedom* was sung for the first time. Every one joined in the chorus, and Ann put all the fervor of her nature into it, but except for fiery moments like this, the war seemed to her remote. It was dwarfed by her personal experience. Her girlhood, with its uncertainties and tremors, was done, and marriage engulfed her.

In November she heard from Fanny.

DEAR ANN:

I write this letter to you with great apprehension, for my mother has strictly forbidden further intercourse between us, and you know mama, Ann. I am just scared to death, but I can not get married without telling you about it.

I am to wed my cousin Hendricks on the twentieth day of December, when he is to have a leave of absence from the Army of the Potomac, for a whole fortnight. These tidings may not be surprising to you, but now that Hendricks truly loves me, I am indeed a happy girl.

I am to be wed in your white satin dress, which you left behind you. It is too long in the skirt for me, and too small in the waist, but those are defects easily remedied. Your other fine clothes my uncle, who is now returned from Europe, directs shall be sent you, even the black velvet, which surely is more suited to a New York matron than to the wife of a Chicago mechanic.

How could you so misbehave yourself, Ann, when my uncle had even made your wedding settlements, and that good young count so adored you? My mother says blood will tell, and I suppose she is right, but I hope you are happy, even with Peter.

With love,

FANNY.

Until she knew her guardian had returned and had made no effort to communicate with her, Ann was not aware of how confidently she had counted on his doing so. Even the fact that Mr. Cortlandt's silence shut

her off with her husband, was an inadequate consolation. She could not rouse herself to any interest in Fanny's marriage, although she was indignant at her slighting reference to Peter.

"They still do not think you are good enough for me," she told him. "It's laughable."

Things had been going better with Peter of late. He had finished his contract for the pipe-fitting, and had been well paid for it. He talked hopefully of future work in connection with the new railroad lines which were to center in Chicago. Ann was enormously proud of him; every day that passed buried deeper that remote time when she had been his superior.

He took Fanny's letter and slowly read it. Ann watched his face eagerly, but his expression did not change. For the first time it occurred to her that Peter had an extraordinary power of masking his feelings. "It's natural enough, I suppose," he said, "but things will go hard with me if I don't make more of a success of my life than your Captain Renneslyer does of his. Fanny's all right, though. Used to sit beside my bed, as sweet and pretty as a pink, too scared to say much." He glanced over the note again, briefly. Then he said, "That velvet dress, Annie, why don't you send it back to her for a wedding present?"

Ann gasped at the magnificence of this gesture, but she was delighted at the idea; after all, she wanted to send Fanny something in proof of her affection.

It was only the next day she looked out of her

front window to see a station hack come laboring down the street. It made slow progress through the heavy mud and broken planks of the roadway, now dropping into holes that threatened to dismember it, and then straining perilously as it burst out of them. Ann was sorry for the laboring horses, but her interest was impersonal until, unexpectedly, they stopped before her gate, and a sudden premonition turned her white. A hand on the door handle inside the lowered glass had a familiar look, and she could see the sharp lines of a silk hat in the dusk of the interior. She rushed to the front door and flung it wide, and there was her guardian in her open gate. He paused at the bottom of the short flight of steps, looking up at her, too agitated to move. The sun was in his eyes; Ann's red hair was like a nimbus about the pearl white of her face. In the instant that they stood gazing at each other, their old companionship was reestablished without a word. She aroused herself and ran down to him; she flung her arms around him and kissed him; she found that she was in tears, but it made no difference.

Mr. Cortlandt said, "My dear, to see you again!"

She thought how old he looked, and broken. She tried to help him up her steep steps, and once inside the house she told him how sorry she was that she should have disappointed him.

Mr. Cortlandt brushed all this away with a brusk gesture. "Never mind that, Ann," he said. "Are you happy? That is what I came to Chicago to find out."

Ann clung tightly to his hand. "Now that I have you again, I am," she assured him. "I can't tell you about Peter; you will have to see for yourself. He is just right for me, uncle. Those others,—somehow they were all wrong."

"You are in love with him, then?"

Ann's wide eyes laughed. "Yes," she said, "I should say I am. I am awfully in love with him. Of course I know he is only a workman, but there are plenty of men out here, uncle, who began like that, and now they are getting on their feet. He has had to add to his shop already because the Chicago and Galena Railroad have given him a big contract."

"You can bring him back to New York, Ann. I don't believe I can live without you, and I can easily get him something to do."

The radiant joy was swept from Ann's face. "It's dreadful not to go to you when you want me," she said soberly, "but Peter would never consent, uncle. He has his own life out here, and it is my life too. You must understand about Peter. He loves his work more than anything in the world, except me. Sometimes I am afraid he loves it more than me, even, but I am proud of him for it, uncle. Even to be near you, I wouldn't have him leave it."

The look of discouragement and fatigue cleared from Mr. Cortlandt's face. "That is as it should be, my child," he said. "Possibly you have been wiser than I could have been for you. You have always been an instinctive creature. . . . I should have

trusted to your instinct in this. . . . I hope I shall like your Peter. . . . And now put on your hat and we'll drive down and surprise him at his shop."

They drove back along Washington Street, which was gay with the crowd going to the races at the new Chicago Driving Park. About them the lusty young town sprawled unceremoniously. The trees of the Garden City still held some of their autumn leaves; the prairie sky above them was a deep unsullied blue; the clean wind off the lake had an edge which made Mr. Cortlandt glad of his overcoat. He turned to look at Ann snuggled beside him, clear skinned, calm eyed, and keen. She had a look of capacity for experience, and something in her eager acceptance of life made the old man, too, unafraid.

THE END

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